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44. 235.

MEN AND WOMEN

OR

MANORIAL RIGHTS.

VOL. I.

MEN AND WOMEN

OR

MANORIAL RIGHTS.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF THE "ADVENTURES OF SUSAN HOPLEY."

PUCK. "Lord what fools these mortals be!"

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON
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1844.

BIBLIOTHECA BOTANICA

MEN AND WOMEN:

OR,

MANORIAL RIGHTS.

CHAPTER I.

"Fortuna vitrea est: tum cum splendet frangitur."

"I could accuse the gaiety of your wardrobe;
. . . . . .
Something might here be spared with safety of
Your birth and honour; since the truest wealth
Shines from the soul, and draws up just admirers!"

SHIRLEY.

"MAMMA," said pretty Caroline Rivers, to her mother, as she entered the drawing-room, "Ellen and I are discussing what we shall wear at Lady Westbury's ball. What do you recommend?"

"Well, my love, the pink gauze, with the satin stripe. I thought you both looked par-

ticularly well at Mrs. Chester's. Wasn't it there you wore them last?"

"Yes, mamma; but you know they won't do for Lady Westbury's."

"Why not, my love?"

"Oh, because there will be so many of the same people there. Besides, we have worn them so often this season."

"Not above three or four times, I fancy."

"Well, but that's very often to appear in the same dress, amongst the same people, in one season," said Ellen.

"They'll do for Brighton very well," said Caroline, "or for any party here that we did not much care about; but I certainly should not like to appear in them at Lady Westbury's, where we shall meet the best people in London."

"Well," said Mary, who was somewhat younger than her sisters, and not yet out, "if they're so good, I dare say they'll excuse your appearing in your pink dresses."

"What do you mean by so good, Mary?"

"Why, you said you'd meet the best people in London, didn't you?"

"Nonsense, Mary! you know very well what Caroline meant. But really, mamma, to be serious, what *shall* we wear?"

"Well, my love, I was quite serious in my advice. I think you could not wear anything prettier than the gauze dresses."

"Oh," said Ellen, "if they were new they'd be very pretty, certainly."

"I am sure they look as good as new," interrupted Mrs. Rivers. "I should not have known you had not put them on for the first time at Mrs. Chester's, and I remember Lady Jane Gordon thought you had. She said, 'What pretty new dresses your daughters have got, Mrs. Rivers.'"

"But by *new*, I mean, if they had not been seen before," said Ellen. "Of course, if Lady Jane Gordon remarked them, so would other people; and equally, of course, they'll recognise them when they see them again, and say, 'There are the two Miss Rivers in their eternal pink dresses.'"

"What an awful circumstance that would be!" said Mary, laughing.

"Oh, you know, Mary, you're a philosopher, and affect not to care what people say; but I don't pretend to anything of the sort," said Caroline.

"Besides," rejoined Ellen, "Mary's not out

yet, and knows nothing about the matter. She'll feel very differently, I dare say, when she is."

"Oh, yes; she'll want new dresses then, as well as other people, you may rely on it."

"I dare say I shall, in reason," replied Mary; "but I don't think I shall care so much about what people think as you and Ellen do."

"Well, we shall see that when the time comes," said Caroline; "but in the meanwhile the present question concerns us who do care. I was thinking of blue satin."

"Very well for a dinner, but too old and heavy for a ball, I think," objected Ellen. "That white and silver gauze Miss Darnley wore the other night was beautiful."

"Yes, but people would say we were imitating Miss Darnley."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mary, with her light laugh.

"But, at all events, we could not get it," rejoined Caroline. "She sent for it from Paris; she told me so."

"It's so difficult," said Ellen, "to think of anything that has not been seen. At this late period of the season, everybody has had everything."

"I think, my dears," said Mrs. Rivers, "you may as well make up your minds to wear the pink gauze; you'll get nothing prettier, even if you were to try; and really you've had so many dresses that I can't——"

What more Mrs. Rivers would have said on the subject at that moment remains uncertain, as the conversation was interrupted at that particular crisis by the entrance of visitors; Sir Everard Lane, who was an admirer of Caroline, and Mr. Charles Danby, who stood in the same relation to Ellen. They had called so early, because Mrs. Chester was making up a party for Richmond, and was anxious to secure the company of the two Miss Rivers. It was to be a delightful thing —four open carriages, a row up the river as far as Pope's Grotto, an elegant dinner at the Star and Garter, &c., and nobody to be admitted of the party that was not universally pronounced to be charming.

"You'll never fill the four carriages upon those conditions," said Caroline.

"Oh, yes, we shall," said Sir Everard. "There's you two and us two, to begin with."

"Well, we four may be tolerably well agreed as to each other," said Ellen; "but, charming

as we are, I doubt greatly whether another carriage load could be found of the same opinion."

"Well, as we don't care for anybody's opinion but our own," said Sir Everard, "never mind whether they do or not. The important point is to make the party, because it must be on Thursday. That's the only morning that will suit Mrs. Chester, for Chester's obliged to start for Paris next week. You'll go, of course?"

"We can go, I suppose, mamma?" said Caroline.

"I know nothing to prevent it, if Mrs. Chester will take charge of you."

"Oh, that she will, and be delighted," said Charles. "It was she who sent us, for she said it would be impossible to do anything without the Miss Rivers, and we are to go back and let her know directly; for so many people will be asking to join, when they hear of it, that she wants to be able to say that the party is complete, and no more can be admitted."

"Can you spare us the carriage, mamma, for that day?" inquired Ellen.

"Oh, that's not at all necessary," said Sir

Everard. "I mean to start my new turn-out for the occasion, and we four are to go in it—that's all settled. It's the neatest thing you ever saw, Caroline—four such beautiful iron-greys!—I'm sure you'll be in love with them."

"That I shall," said Caroline; "it's my favourite colour."

"Well, Charles, come; now we must run back to Mrs. Chester, and tell her everything is settled here, and then proceed to make the rest of the arrangements. Of course we meet to-night at Lady Dynevor's?"

"Certainly; and remember, to-morrow you go with us to the opera."

"You had better come here and take your coffee," said Mrs. Rivers, "and let us all go together."

"We will!—and to-night we shall be able to tell you all the arrangements we have made for Thursday. And now we must be off! Come along, Charles!"

"And now, mamma," said Caroline, as soon as the door closed, "what are we to do about bonnets? Ours will never do for Thursday—that's quite clear."

"Really, Caroline, I can't afford to give you any others."

"Then we can't go. Shabby bonnets on such an occasion as that are out of the question. Rely on it, everybody will have new ones, and ours are quite faded."

"They were quite spoilt at the races," said Ellen. "I've been ashamed to wear mine ever since."

"You positively must make them do," said Mrs. Rivers. "Those two bonnets cost eight guineas."

"Well, mamma, Maria Darnley's was six."

"But Mr. Darnley's a very rich man, Ellen."

"Well, mamma, do you know, I think you are growing very stingy," said Caroline. "You always talk now so much about what things cost, and make so many difficulties about our having anything new. You never used to be so."

"Perhaps I have my reasons, Caroline," replied Mrs. Rivers, with a sigh.

"What reasons, mamma?" asked Caroline.

"What reasons, mamma?" echoed Ellen; whilst Mary looked up from her netting, and fixed her eyes, with a grave curiosity, on her mother's face.

"Nothing, my dears, that there is any

necessity for mentioning to you," said Mrs. Rivers; for her heart quailed at the idea of clouding their spirits with gloomy forebodings; "but I do wish you would restrain your notions of what is necessary in the article of dress within a little narrower limits. Remember, people's resources are different."

"But you know, mamma, when one moves in a certain circle, one must have certain things," said Caroline.

"And I don't think we are unreasonable," said Ellen. "For example, we don't pretend to dress like Maria Darnley."

"Oh no," said Caroline, "that would be absurd. But at the same time there are limits on the other side; and I confess I would infinitely rather never go into society at all, than run the risk of being thought worse dressed than other people."

"If you really think, mamma, you cannot give us new bonnets," said Ellen, half laughing, for she could not believe in the reality of anything so absurd, "why we must give up going to Richmond, and we had better send an excuse to Mrs. Chester at once."

"We'll look at them when we go up to

dress," said Mrs. Rivers. "I think if Vining were to trim them up a little they might do. It's more the flowers than the bonnets that are spoilt, I fancy. I'll give her some of my blonde and feathers, and we'll see what she can do."

"Oh, horrid, mamma! Nobody wears feathers now, you know; nor blonde either, on bonnets—at least, not young people."

"Besides," objected Ellen, "of all horrid things, an old bonnet, vamped up to look new, is the worst. It never deceives anybody but the unfortunate wearer. I had rather expose it bravely in its genuine shabbiness."

Here the conversation was again interrupted by the footman, who said, there was a person below who wanted to see Mr. Rivers.

"But your master's out, Thomas; and I don't know when he'll be at home."

"So I said, ma'am; but he says, in that case, he must see you."

"Must! how very extraordinary!" said Caroline. "What sort of person is he, Thomas?"

"I don't know whether he's a tradesman, or what he is, ma'am," replied Thomas; "but he wont go away without seeing either master or missus."

"Well, I'll go," said Mrs. Rivers, rising with evident reluctance; "send him into the breakfast room."

"I wonder what papa can have to do with such odd people," said Caroline. "They're always coming here and wanting to speak to him."

"I'm thinking what we *are* to do for bonnets, if mamma will not give us new ones," said Ellen.

"Oh, she will, of course," replied Caroline. "She always makes difficulties at first, you know; at least, lately. She never used to do so."

"We must either have pale pink bonnets or white," said Ellen, "on account of our lilac dresses."

"Pink crape, I think," said Caroline. "I saw a beautiful one at Herbaut's the other day."

"But isn't she very dear?" said Mary.

"Not much dearer than other people; one cannot expect to get a bonnet under three guineas, and I think that was only three and a half."

"There's the carriage," said Ellen. "I wonder if mamma means to go out, for we

really must see about what we are to wear at Lady Westbury's.

Here the footman entered with a little three-cornered note on a silver waiter.

"From Lady Gage," said Caroline, opening it, "to beg we will call on her, to make arrangements for a group at Lady Dalton's bal costumé."

"We might go this morning if mamma does not want the carriage," said Ellen.

"Thomas, is that person gone that mamma went to speak to?" inquired Caroline.

"No, ma'am; he's speaking to missus in the breakfast room."

"Go and inquire if she wants the carriage; and say that if she does not, we'll take it, to call on Lady Gage. Say that Lady Gage has sent for us."

"Yes, ma'am."

"And then," said Ellen, "we might call at Hervey's, and see what they've got that would do for Lady Westbury's."

"Missus is not going out, ma'am," said Thomas, returning; "she begs you won't wait for her."

"Well, then, now come, dear; we'll go directly," said Caroline.

"The luncheon's ready, ma'am," said Thomas.

"Do you want any luncheon, Ellen?"

"I'll just take a cheesecake; I shall not be a moment."

"You'll go with us, Mary, won't you?" said Caroline.

"No, thank you," replied Mary. "I think I'll stay at home with mamma."

Mary had sat alone for some time before her mamma returned to the drawing room; when she did, she looked flushed and disturbed. She said nothing, however; but, seating herself at her frame, resumed her needle.

After an interval of some minutes, during which she appeared engaged with no very pleasant reflections, she looked up and said, "Are your sisters gone, Mary?"

"Yes, mamma; they went directly."

"What does Lady Gage want with them?"

"To consult about a group for Lady Dalton's bal costumé."

Mrs. Rivers uttered a little sound indicative of vexation. "I wish," she said, "Lady Gage would not be always drawing them into that sort of thing. It's very thoughtless of her."

"She likes to have them, I suppose, because they're so pretty," said Mary.

"That's all very well; but she ought to reflect what an expense it is. For that last group she got up—who was it for? Oh, I recollect, Lady Carpue—well, there was a parcel of trumpery bought, that, because it was worth nothing, was to cost nothing; and I am sure there was not less than twelve or fifteen pounds spent on those dresses; and, after all, they were perfectly useless for any other purpose. I wish I had seen them before they went. They are so thoughtless!"

"They have always been used to have every thing they wished," said Mary.

"They must learn to confine their wishes within more reasonable limits," said Mrs. Rivers, with some asperity; "or they must go out less; things cannot go on at this rate."

"Mamma," said Mary, after a short silence, "is there anything wrong?"

"What sort of thing, my dear?"

"I mean, mamma, has anything happened disagreeable?"

"I don't quite know what you mean, Mary. Why do you think anything disagreeable has happened?"

"Why, mamma, partly, because you talk so much about expense, and what things cost; and, partly, because I think you often look uneasy; and once or twice lately, when papa dined at home, and there was no company, I thought he seemed more absent and silent than usual; and then, mamma——"

"Well, Mary?"

"Well, mamma, there are so many odd people come here, wanting papa, and saying they *must* see him; and sometimes I think——"

"Well, dear, what do you think?"

"Why, sometimes I think it's about money."

"Well, Mary, and suppose it is about money?"

"Is it, mamma?" said Mary, looking anxiously at her mother.

Mrs. Rivers was silent for a minute; she compressed her lips, and tried to keep down her swelling heart, and go on with her work; but it would not do; the tears filled her eyes, and she could not see her stitches. She held down her head to hide her face from Mary, but then they fell on her delicate colours, and stained the lilacs; so she was obliged to desist.

Mary could not see the tears, but she felt them. "Mamma!" she said, rising from her

seat, and approaching her mother. Mrs. Rivers drew out her handkerchief, and hid her face.

"Dear mamma!" said Mary, stealing her arm gently round her mother's neck.

"Oh, Mary, Mary!" sobbed Mrs. Rivers, laying her head on her daughter's bosom, "what a comfort you are to me!"

AND HERE ENDETH THE FIRST CHAPTER.

CHAPTER II.

"What will become of us! All will away!
My husband never ceases in expense,
Both to consume his credit and his house;
And 'tis set down by Heaven's just decree,
That Riot's child must needs be beggary."

YORKSHIRE TRAGEDY.

"Se a ciascuno l'interno affanno
Si leggesse in fronte scritto,
Quanti mai che invidia fanno,
Ci farebbero pietà."

METASTASIO.

THAT day there happened a conjunction of circumstances that occurred but rarely in the house of Mr. Rivers; that is to say, there was no company, and he dined at home. He seemed rather less unconscious, too, of the presence of his wife and daughters than he usually was on such occasions; silent and abstracted he was always. Even in the gayest company,

his mind seemed never disengaged; but ever working, labouring, solving some deep problem, or wrapt in some profound calculation. He might have been an astronomer, measuring the sun's path, or counting the stars in the milky-way; but he was only a gambler, reckoning the chances of the game. Yet no one, for immortality, nor for mankind's good, nor for the saving of his own soul—no, nor for the world's wealth, which many rate higher than all, ever toiled harder, or watched later, or wore and withered mind and body, more than he did, in the pursuit of his own ruin.

But little beyond the prime of life, he was already a faded, wrinkled, haggard-looking man, hollow-eyed and wan, with hair that might have become the head of a hundred years, and a back bowed, not with substantial burdens, such as humble men bend under, but with the far heavier weight of care. The fine outline, the straight, aristocratic features, still remained; so did the polished manners, at least, when he was awakened from his dreams—the refined air, and the undeniable look of a gentleman; but he was a blasted and a withered tree—a wreck that but served to shew what his prime had been. His wife, too, was a pretty, deli-

cate, faded creature, who, had she lived without care, would have looked scarcely older than her daughters; but anxiety had left its traces on her features, and sleepless nights had wasted the flesh from her bones; for of late she had lived the life of Damocles; and worse—much worse; she not only dreaded the moment when the sword would fall, but she knew that, when it did, it would slay what was much dearer than herself—her children, born and bred in affluence, and accustomed to every luxury; to whom elegance and refinement were necessities of habit and of taste; and who had so little acquaintance with poverty, that they had never once, in their whole lives, dreamed that it could possibly reach themselves. It was only of late years she had discovered the peril herself. Her husband's fortune had been moderate; hers had been splendid; and had it been fairly spent, they would but have been living in accordance with their means. But where is the purse to be found that can answer the drafts of a gambler? Alas! she daily saw symptoms that theirs was growing less and less sufficient. She had learnt to dread the sight of a letter, lest it should contain a bill; and her heart sunk at the announcement

that "a person wanted to speak to her." She had made acquaintance with the horror of being pressed for money she could not pay.

And what was to be done? For as Caroline said, "when one lives in a certain circle, one must have certain things." And how were these certain things to be supplied by the failing purse? or how was the magic circle that imposed their necessity to be escaped? There was no possibility of getting out of it but by flight; and would her husband have heard of such a thing? or could she, soft-hearted and indulgent as she was, have found courage to propose it to her children? Never! There was nothing left for her but to live on as she could, and wait till the storm burst, and the ruin crushed her. Some people, with stronger hearts, and of sterner stuff, might have done better—but she could not.

Besides, in spite of his faults, she loved her husband; and he, gambler as he was, loved her as much as a gambler could; and he loved his children, too, and was proud of them—but he loved play better than all. Sometimes she had tried to expostulate with him, and to get him to listen to her statements and repre-

sentations—but it was ever in vain; and, indeed, it was only when the evil was almost, or quite, beyond remedy, that she had discovered the state of their affairs; and then the irremediable nature of the mischief discouraged her exertions, and rendered Mr. Rivers more unwilling to listen to her arguments. "If things were so bad, where was the use of it—perhaps something would happen—*we must trust to the chapter of accidents.*"

Thus, the only person who knew and felt the danger, was powerless; and any little efforts she made to instil notions of economy or self-denial into the minds of her children, were counteracted by their father, who, both from pride and affection, and an unwillingness to witness privations of which he was himself the cause, liked them to make as good an appearance as other young persons of their circle. A hint given to papa that they could not go to Richmond without new bonnets, or to Lady Westbury's without new dresses, was quite sufficient; "Let them have what they want, Eliza; they must not appear worse dressed than the young people they associate with."

"But, dear Marmaduke, consider!"

"What's the use of considering, my love? Surely a few bonnets or dresses for the girls cannot make much difference!"

"Indeed, dear, you are mistaken. You don't know the price of these things. They cannot have such dresses as they want for Lady Westbury's for less than——"

"Well, my love, it's no use frightening yourself or me about the sum—the things must be had. I would not, on any account, that any remarks were made about their appearance; it might awaken awkward suspicions. People are quick to lay hold of anything; besides, poor things, it would be very unpleasant for them, who have always been distinguished as well-dressed girls, all at once to fall off, and feel themselves the objects of unpleasant observations."

"But that is not what I intend, Marmaduke. They have a great many handsome dresses that nobody could remark as shabby."

"But Caroline says they have already been seen so often that every body knows them; and, I dare say, amongst women, that's unpleasant."

"But it will be much more unpleasant, Marmaduke, if they are obliged to forego

things of more importance. I had a most painful interview to-day with Mr. Harpur. He came here wanting to see you, and as you were not at home, I was obliged to go down to him. He says he calls so often, without being able to see you, that he is persuaded you are denied to him; and he declares, if you don't pay him, he shall be in the Gazette, for that he cannot get on longer without the money."

"I'll pay him soon. I've had a run of ill luck lately; it will happen so, now and then; but it's taking a turn, and then it will be all the other way—it always is so with me."

"I hope it will, I'm sure," said Mrs. Rivers; for she had long ceased to hope anything so extravagant as that he should leave off playing; all she dared to wish was, that he might play with luck. She had been too young and too much in love either to interfere or to be well aware of the necessity of doing so in the early days of their married life. True, the gaming table had been a powerful rival, and had robbed her of much more of her husband's society than she liked; but when he did come home, he was kind and indulgent, and she had soon a young family to fill up her heart and

occupy her time, and plenty of the best society in London to amuse her when she sought diversion; and as for his absence at the gaming table all night, it had long been so much a thing of course, and so regular a circumstance of her daily existence, that she had ceased to observe it, or almost to remember that it might have been otherwise.

At length, Thursday, the day of Mrs. Chester's party to Richmond, arrived; and Sir Everard Lane's elegant equipage carried off the young ladies. Nothing could look prettier than they did, certainly, in their lilac watered silks, and pale pink bonnets, with their bright faces, and light hearts, that knew no care, and foresaw no sorrow.

"Oh, Ellen," whispered Caroline, "see, there's my Damon. Surely he does not belong to the party, does he?" And as she spoke, she directed her sister's attention to a young man on a chestnut horse, that rode near their carriage.

"I should not much wonder," said Ellen; "for you know it was at Mrs. Chester's we first saw him; and somebody said he was some sort of a relation, or connexion, of hers—some poor cousin, or something of that sort."

"But I can hardly fancy she would ask him to join such a party as this?"

"Ask Sir Everard about him."

"No; ask him yourself," said Caroline, "I shall laugh if I attempt it."

"Does that gentleman belong to our party, Sir Everard? Do you know who he is?" said Ellen.

"That!" said Sir Everard, applying his glass to his eye, and coolly surveying the stranger, who, appearing to feel some confusion, turned his head another way. "Why, I rather think he does. Mrs. Chester said something to me, yesterday, about putting in some cousin of hers, that she's obliged to patronise, and I dare say that's him; for that's one of Chester's horses he's riding."

"You don't know his name, then?"

"No; do you, Danby?"

"What?"

"Know the name of that person there, that's riding Chester's mare?"

"That," said Charles, looking round; "oh, yes, that's Russell. Poor Russell! I didn't see him. How are you, Russell? Are you one of our party to Richmond?"

"Yes," said Mr. Russell, blushing, and yet cheered by this recognition. "Mrs. Chester has been so kind as to admit me."

"Do you know the Miss Rivers? Allow me to introduce Mr. Henry Russell—Miss Rivers, Miss Ellen Rivers. Lane, don't you know my friend Russell? We were at college together, Russell and I."

"Do tell us about him," said Ellen, when their new acquaintance fell back a little, to avoid inconveniencing them with dust. "What is he?—and who is he?"

"He's in the Temple, I believe, studying for the bar. His father's a clergyman in the country somewhere; I don't know where exactly, at least, I forget. Poor, I believe; he's had some misfortunes or reverses, or something of that sort. I don't remember the particulars; but he and I were at college together; and he once pulled me out of the river, when I was like to be drowned, so I'm bound to pray for him ever after."

"Certainly," said Caroline, "that's an obligation not to be forgotten."

"But I've a curiosity about him," said Ellen, who was aware that he was desperately in love with Caroline. "Has he any other

merit besides that of having pulled you out of the river?"

"Why, he's a very good fellow, I believe," said Charles; "but you know, a man at Oxford that's poor, has scarcely an opportunity of shewing what he is; but he's very clever; and I should think if he had more confidence he'd be very likely to make a figure at the bar. But he's shy. He has often told me, that if he didn't want it, he had little doubt but he could make his fortune; but that being a poor devil, he should always remain one."

"I can understand that," said Caroline; "it must be so depressing to be poor; and the difficulties of rising must seem so insurmountable."

"But the motive is proportionably strong," said Ellen; "I think I should try anything rather than remain poor."

"I don't think I should have the heart to try anything," said Caroline.

"What's that you are talking about trying?" said Sir Everard, looking down from the box. "What couldn't you try, Caroline? Is it my bay filly?"

"We're not talking about your filly. I

say I couldn't try to rise if I were poor; could you?"

"Upon my soul, I don't know," said Sir Everard. "Why?—who's poor?"

"Hush! take care! Don't speak so loud!" said Caroline. "Never mind now; we'll tell you by and bye;" for just then, the road being less dusty, the cavalier ventured to join the carriage again; but from shyness, or modesty, or the depression of poverty, that Caroline had imagined, he never spoke but when he was spoken to; and was only rewarded for the share he got of their dust, and the uneasy pace to which he confined his horse, by a side view of her pink bonnet, and an occasional glance at the tip of her pretty Grecian nose.

During the remainder of the day, his homage was equally constant and unpresuming; he contrived to sit in the same boat when they went up the river, to walk near her in the park, and to secure a seat at the dinner-table, where he could view her to his heart's content; and Caroline was not unconscious that he was a great deal more occupied in admiring her charms than in satisfying his own appetite; but he never put himself forward, or offered her any attentions, or even addressed her, ex-

cept in the course of general conversation; so that the most fastidious or *revêche* person could scarcely have been offended or annoyed by such a humble worshipper.

And this conduct he persisted in after the Richmond party, as he had done before it; ever since he had first seen her, a few weeks previously, at Mrs. Chester's, she seemed his bright particular star, and he lived by looking at her; but so far from his sphere, so high beyond his reach, that he never aimed at a nearer acquaintance.

Caroline called him her "dumb lover;" Ellen laughed, and said,—

> "The lover who is dumb, you know,
> Deserves a double pity;"

and Mary did pity him, sincerely; for nature told her that it was the character of true love to be humble, to hope little, and to exist upon little. Those who maintain, and imagine, that love cannot exist unrequited, or without the hope of being so, know nothing of pure, disinterested, devoted affection; and their ignorance is not strange, because such love is rare, and is a gem only found in very clear, deep streams. The usual form is an alloy.

Such was the life and economy, internal and external, of the Rivers' family; and here endeth the second chapter of their history. The third will be different.

CHAPTER III.

—— "to have a being, and to live 'mongst men,
Is a fearful living and a poor one; let a man truly think on't."
WOMEN BEWARE WOMEN.

"Aspice, quam subito, marcet, quod floruit ante!
Aspice, quam subito, quod stetit ante, cadit!"
MONASTIC INSCRIPTION AT BRAGA.

THERE can be no more disagreeable office than for a person of restricted means to seek lodgings in a great city; and if to the restricted means be added a sensitive pride, and an easily offended taste, the pursuit becomes really a sore trial. First, the fashionable part of the town is not to be thought of, so it is of no use pausing there. Then the wide, cheerful, open streets are hurried through with a sigh—everything there would be too dear. At length bills

are seen in a window, in a quarter not altogether odious, and where it is supposed prices ought to be moderate. The rooms are neatly furnished, the entrance is respectable, the maid-servant tidy. The mistress of the house wears a black silk gown, and a smart cap with yellow ribbons, and has a French watch at her side. She is extremely civil, and attends the inquirer up stairs. She knows that her apartments, for anybody who does not require things on a grander scale, are unexceptionable, and she exhibits them with entire complacence. No fault is found; the anxious candidate feels that they would be the very thing to suit, and by acquiescence in her commendations, tacitly admits as much. Then comes the trying question on which all turns. It is deferred as long as possible, and is at last put with an assumed air of indifference, though with an anxious heart. Alas! the answer is fatal. The terms are too high; and, abashed and confused, the disappointed lodging-seeker shakes his head, and says, "he's afraid it won't suit." Whereupon the hostess stares at him with an aspect of astonishment bordering on indignation. She feels too much contempt to expostulate, and closes the colloquy by deliberately turning

about and walking down stairs, desiring Betty, as she vanishes into the parlour, to "bring up some more boiling water, as the tea in the pot will be quite cold;" whilst he, the unhappy Master Shortpurse, finding himself convicted of poverty, slinks off, with an air to which that of a dog running away from a stone, with his tail between his legs, is dignified and decorous. Another and another experiment of the same sort is made, each accompanied by similar species of torture to the experimentalist, till at length, wearied, irritated, mortified, and spirit-broken, he abandons the struggle; and, resigning all the conditions he had first clung to, neatness, cleanliness, airiness, and a little odour of gentility, he plunges down at once to the sordid and the mean; and then what sights, what smells, what sounds, salute him! For what is there under the sun so nasty as a squalid lodging! The close street, full of harridanish-looking women, and noisy, dirty children, rolling in the kennel; the mean shops, with their refuse merchandise; the gin-cellars, and the pawnbrokers, and the complication of villanous odours! The slatternly, blowzy maid of all work, that is "to do for the lodgers;" the dark narrow passage, where

every time you go in and out, you tumble over a pail or a dust-pan; the ragged stair-carpet; the muggy atmosphere of the rooms, where a window has not been opened for six weeks; the greasy drugget that hides the worn carpet; the faded bits of green baize that cover the tables; the washed-out cotton furniture! And then, still worse, the bed-rooms! How much misery, how much disease, how much uncleanness, have stretched themselves upon that couch where you are expected to lay your head? How many sighs of woe, how many cries of agony, how many dying groans, have echoed from beneath that faded canopy? The walls seem hung with them! The air seems rife with them! And then the coarse hostess, in whom insolence and servility contend the mastery—griping and extortionate, fawning and familiar, brutal and abusive, as the index of her interest guides her. Oh, poverty, poverty, thou art indeed a bitter draught! For it is a draught in which all bitterness combines—a decoction of all evils—an essence of all woes!

Then, what can be so forlorn as the feelings of a stranger on the first initiation into London lodging life? Even where the lodgings

are dear, and tolerably good, and the people of the house think it worth while to be civil, you seem planted in a spot to which you never can grow. The furniture and all the utensils intended for your use are so awkward, so heterogeneous, and placed in such inconvenient positions; they run so counter to your habits, or your habits to them. You are not acquainted with them, and they seem to have no desire to make themselves agreeable, or to accommodate difficulties; and as for anything like familiarity, or cordiality, on either side, the thing seems out of the question. Then your servants are so dissatisfied with their accommodation, declaring they can get nothing in the world they want; whilst the maid of the house, accustomed to the same complaints on every fresh arrival, turns a deaf ear to their remonstrances, knowing, from previous experience, that, in a few days, they will get used to things as they are, and resign themselves to evils they cannot redress. Then, how you are to be provided with food, and how it is ever to be cooked, so as to render it eatable, seems a problem worthy of Euclid. Breakfast appears difficult, dinner impossible. You hear something about a quarter of a pound of tea,

and a pound of mutton chops, and a few potatoes; and you see the maid-servant of the house coming across the street with a slice of butter in a bit of greasy white paper, and you wonder whether it can be intended for you. It is, you may rely on it; and so is the loaf she is carrying under her arm. You had better not look any longer, for there comes the little girl that runs of errands, carrying the milk in a white basin, and she is taking a sup just as she turns the corner! In short, however the tables and chairs and washing-stands may in process of time become more amenable to reason, the feeding is generally hopeless. On that score, your worst anticipations are pretty sure to be realized; and there is but one way of meeting the dilemma, which is to do as you did in your childhood, when you played at bob-cherry—"open your mouth and shut your eyes, and take what God will send you;" only in the case supposed, it would perhaps be advisable to change the name of the donor.

Yet, all these miseries—nay, and worse—were Mrs. Rivers and her daughters condemned to suffer, for within little more than two years after the period we have described,

the once gay and handsome and elegant Marmaduke Rivers was in the King's Bench, and his wife and children were seeking where to hide their heads. A miserable lodging, such as we have painted, sheltered them, and they existed on a little annuity of two hundred pounds, belonging to Mrs. Rivers, which the creditors could not touch, and which was all she had retained of her splendid fortune. True, some people would have been rich upon such a sum, but to them, who were accustomed to spend thousands, it was abject poverty; especially as, in order to be near Mr. Rivers, and afford him what little aid they could out of their small means, they were obliged to live in London. In the country, they might have enjoyed the inestimable blessings of fresh air, cleanliness, and retirement; the two first unattainable in London, but by the affluent; and the last, not to be had at any price—*loneliness*, certainly, as much as you please, if you happen not to be over-burthened with acquaintance: but the seclusion of the country, where you have birds singing in the woods, and bees buzzing in the meadows; cows lowing in rich pastures, and lambs sporting on the hills; hawthorn and wild roses in the hedges,

and buttercups and daisies in the fields; with the green grass beneath your feet, the pure air around you, and the blue heavens above; is very unlike the loneliness of brick walls, dirty kennels, and a smoky atmosphere; where, for the music of birds and bees, and lowing kine, you have all manner of offensive human sounds; loud oaths, angry women, and squalling children; for the sweet-smelling hawthorn and the scented violet, a combination of odours, that humanity congregated together in dirt and squalor alone can furnish; where lambs never sport; where birds never sing; where the grass is not green, nor the flowers sweet, nor the heavens blue; and where, when the world looks coldly on us, and the pleasures of the world have forsaken us, and we throw our eyes, weary with weeping, around, to seek for comfort, we cannot find Nature; she, too, is far from us; and for the heavy air that weighs us down, we can hardly lift our hearts to Nature's God, nor contemplate his works, humanity's so thick upon us; and those we do see are, for the most, deformed and bleared; not fresh from out his hand, as in his green and flowery domain, but spoiled by human dealing.

Here they dwelt in sadness and in sorrow; Mrs. Rivers, as far as regarded herself, not much more unhappy than she was before; perhaps scarcely so much so; for the privations and disgusts she personally suffered were less to her than the daily dread and anticipation of evil, in which she had so long lived, but her grief for her husband and children was inexpressible. To see how the roses were fading from their young cheeks, how the bright eyes were dimmed with tears, and how the laughing lips, that laughed no more, were assuming that expression of forced endurance, that the lips of the suffering so frequently acquire—to see how their appetites failed, how their forms wasted, and their light step grew heavy, and with what sensitive shame they shrunk from every eye!

"Oh, mamma! let us hide our heads, and die, and be never seen!"

"Oh, no; never seen, nor remembered either. If they would but forget us!"

"They will do that, my love. Everybody's forgotten in the world when they're no longer seen!"

"Yes," said Caroline; "if it were not for that Mr. Russell finding us out. It's so im-

pertinent of him! A man that we never knew!"

"Don't say impertinent, Caroline," said Mary. "I'm sure his demeanour, when he met us, was anything but impertinent. I question whether he would have taken off his hat with so much reverence when we lived in Grafton Street."

"I don't think he would," said Ellen; "I must say that for him; indeed, he very seldom availed himself of an opportunity of bowing to us at all; but still it's very disagreeable; and if he should tell other people where we are, it will be still worse."

"Other people won't trouble you, my dear," said Mrs. Rivers. "Anybody that desired to discover us would have found the same means of doing it that he had. I never heard of anybody, in our situation, that was too much troubled by their friends."

"So much the better," said Caroline, with some bitterness.

"Mr. Russell's seeking our acquaintance now may be disagreeable to you," said Mary; "but you ought to be just to him; more particularly as he does it so modestly. We all saw he was in love with you when we were

rich; or, at least, when he thought we were; but he never sought our acquaintance then."

"And what's the use of his seeking it now, Mary? If I slighted him then, does he think I would accept his attentions now?"

"I don't know whether he thinks it, but his wishing it is surely generous."

"He has taken some pains to get introduced to your papa," said Mrs. Rivers. "He was at the King's Bench, the other day, about some business, and he begged somebody he knew there to introduce him. Your papa told me of it this morning, and he says he likes him very much. He didn't find him shy at all; but modest and clever."

"I'm sure that was very kind of him," said Mary.

"Yes, it was," said Caroline; "I like him for that. Poor, dear papa!" For in spite of his faults, there was something so naturally loveable and attractive about Mr. Rivers, and he had been so kind and indulgent to them, that, ruined as they were by his pernicious vice, they tenderly loved him still.

This introduction to Mr. Rivers was a *coup de maître* on the part of Russell; it not only softened the heart of the proud and sensitive

Caroline, but it procured him the acquaintance of the ladies; for when they found him talking to their papa, alleviating his troubles by his kindness, and amusing his wearied mind by his agreeable conversation, they could not refuse to reward him by what they saw he so ardently desired; and when the pride was subdued, and the mortification was overcome, they were repaid for the effort, by finding in him a faithful and devoted friend; for to that character he confined himself; if his eyes involuntarily told of love, his words never did.

But Russell was not the only person from whom, in their adversity, they received reverential bows; there was a young artist, that lived at the top of the house, in a garret, that bowed very low too. He had commenced the acquaintance by standing aside when they met on the narrow stairs, and squeezing himself up against the wainscot in order to leave them all the room he could; the space was certainly small enough, but it was not much of it that he occupied, for he was as thin and as tall as a direction-post. Then, he always rushed down stairs to open the door for them, if he happened to be in the way when they were going out; and he was equally alert to give

them the benefit of his key, if they happened to be returning, when he was outside; and these accidents occurred so often, that there was considerable reason to apprehend that if his dinner depended upon his work, he must sometimes go without it; he was certainly either very fortunate, or very vigilant. Then, one day he had the happiness of driving off a savage butcher's dog that had blockaded them in a door-way, where they had taken shelter; and as they were very frightened, they thanked him with an ardour proportioned to their alarm; and after this event, they made a point of bowing and smiling, as graciously as their sad lips could smile; and sometimes Mary, who, partly from having been less in the world, and partly from a difference of character, was better able to lift up her head under their afflictions than her sisters, would say, "Good morning, Mr. Longfellow!" or "Good afternoon, Mr. Longfellow!" on which occasions he blushed crimson—forehead, ears, and all; partly from the *saisissement* her condescension produced, and partly from the distressing sound of his own name, of which, as of everything else about himself, he was heartily ashamed. It was certainly an unfortunate one,

the more so from its singular applicability to his own person, of which he was also extremely ashamed; in short, as we said before, he was ashamed of everything; of his long, pale face, which a person with more self-esteem would have flattered himself was interesting, but which he apprehended was ghastly and cadaverous; of his dress, which was shabby and ill-made, and which hung upon his ungainly figure as on a clothes-horse. He was ashamed of the vertical space he occupied on the globe, or rather in the globe's atmosphere, which he looked upon as an encroachment—the horizontal one was not worth mentioning; and he was ashamed of having been born into the world, where he thought he had no business, and which he fancied he disfigured. And all these painful feelings were partly natural, and partly the result of the terrible ordeal he had gone through at a large school, where, from his peculiar person and odd name, combined with his poverty and bashfulness, he had been the butt and the victim.

There was one item, however, which we should have excepted from Mr. Longfellow's list of mortifications, and that was, his mind; and yet it *was* a source of mortification, too;

for he knew that he had not, and was never likely to have, justice done him by the world; and he had an intense conviction, not inconsistent with a great deal of genuine modesty, that but for the many adverse circumstances that were against him, there was something in him that he might have brought out. But what could be expected of a poor, friendless, pale-faced youth, upwards of six feet high, and whose name was Longfellow? So thought Mr. Elias, and so thinking, he felt himself in the dust, and had not the heart to make himself wings to rise out of it.

CHAPTER IV.

"How ruthless men are to adversity!"
GREEN'S TU QUOQUE.

"Les petits esprits sont blessés des petites choses."
ROCHEFOUCAULD.

"Les sots et les provinceaux ont cela de commun, qu'ils sont toujours prets à se fâcher et à croire qu'on se moque d'eux; les premiers faute de bon sens, les seconds faute d'usage du monde."—DUCLOS.

THE day after Mrs. and the Miss Rivers had established themselves in Mrs. Wood's lodging, —for such was the name of the owner of the house,—they had observed a hackney-coach stop at the door, out of which stepped a lady and a gentleman, the former holding a handkerchief to her face, in a manner that led them to believe she was in great affliction. Presently they heard them ascend the stairs, and enter

the apartment beneath them, and whilst they were conjecturing what might be the source of her troubles, they were suddenly startled by a series of such piercing screams, issuing from that quarter, as, concluding them to proceed from the unhappy stranger, seemed to denote that her misfortunes had reached their climax, since nothing short of despair, they thought, could elicit such agonizing cries. Then there was a violent ringing of the bell, and a great deal of running up and down stairs, which they concluded was for hartshorn and salvolatile; and as this bustle was succeeded by an intermission of the screams, they trusted the remedies had proved efficacious. But just as they were rejoicing in this happy result, their nerves were again shaken by a roar, which, although it evidently proceeded from a human throat, might have done credit to the lungs of a bull, in its last agonies; and then again the bell rang furiously. "Oh, how dreadful!" cried Caroline, covering her ears with her hands.

"They must be murdering somebody!" said Ellen, turning very pale. "Oh, how I wish mamma was at home! What shall we do?"

"I'll see what it is," said Mary, "I'm de-

termined!" rushing out of the room and down the stairs, and arriving at the drawing-room door just time enough to hear a vehement cry for more hot water, and to see the maid issuing from the room with a blood-stained cloth in her hand. "Good Heavens! what is the matter?" she cried. "Is there a quarrel?"

"Lauk, no, miss!" answered the girl; "it's only the dentist a pulling out their teeth."

Whether Mr. Fitzhugh was not very expert, or whether his patients' teeth were particularly fast set, it is difficult to say, but few days past without some such diversion to their solitude as that we have described; but disagreeable as this was, they would have been glad if it had been the worst consequence of their near neighbourhood to the dentist; but a much more unpleasant one was, that his wife insisted on making their acquaintance. She knew that, however poor they were now, they had been very fine people once. She had learned that from the landlady, who had heard it from her husband, who had heard it at the public-house from the landlord, who had been let into the secret by the potboy that carried the beer to some of the prisoners; and as she was ambitious and curious, and had a decided

taste for the genteel, she was determined not to miss so fair an opportunity of seeing something of the manners of high life. Besides, the uncertainty of human affairs being proverbial, there was no telling whether some revolution might not replace them again in their former condition, and then, after the civility she had shewn them in their adversity, they could do no less than return the compliment in their prosperity, and thus she should obtain an introduction into the *beau monde*—a consummation she devoutly desired.

The series of events by which this object was to be obtained, Mrs. Fitzhugh had no difficulty in discerning, but the whole plan was in danger of being frustrated by the difficulties of the first step; the ladies seemed quite inaccessible to her civilities. She sat with her room-door open, that she might hear their movements, and have an opportunity of meeting them on the stairs, as they went up and down; every now and then she took it into her head that some member of the family was ill, in order that she might have an excuse for sending the maid, with her compliments, to inquire how the invalid was. One day she took one of the combs out of her front

hair, and, knocking at their door, declared she had found it in the passage, and begged to know if it did not belong to one of the young ladies; and she offered them the loan of everything she had, from her silver tea-pot, when they had company, down to her little tin saucepan, for making water-gruel when they were sick. But it was all in vain; the civilities were coldly rejected, and not an inch of ground was gained. Upon this she got angry, after the manner of vulgar people, who always think themselves affronted if you decline their acquaintance; and as she was not a person to keep her injuries to herself, she communicated them to the landlady, giving it as her opinion, that such airs were quite out of place for second-floor lodgers. Mrs. Wood, who had felt herself slighted too, in various ways, took up Mrs. Fitzhugh's cause, and began to shew symptons of insolence, refusing little accommodations that were requested, and making things as uncomfortable as she could; and when the ladies expressed their surprise to the maid at this incivility, the girl, who liked them much better than the Fitzhughs, who, betwixt themselves and their patients, gave a great deal of trouble, acquainted them with the reason, and strongly advised them, if

they meant to remain in the house, to keep on good terms with the rest of the inmates. They would have been very glad, poor souls! to have left it; but where were they to go? And if they underwent the horrors of changing their quarters, how were they sure, that in another lodging they might not meet with people as intrusive and disagreeable, perhaps worse; besides that the apartments were decidedly the least objectionable they had seen, at the rate of rent they were able to pay.

"We must accommodate ourselves to circumstances," said Mrs. Rivers to her daughters, when an often-repeated invitation to tea, which had been the early fruits of the pacific measures, adopted in pursuance of Harriet's advice, was under discussion. "It's very disagreeable, beyond a doubt, but we used to go to a great many tiresome and disagreeable parties formerly, when we had no motive for going but because other people did, and we must submit to go to another, now that we have a very strong motive. If we offend these women, they will make the house uninhabitable to us, and we're very much at their mercy in many ways. It will be a couple of hours' annoyance, and that's all."

"Who can tell that?" said Caroline; "when she has prevailed with us once, she'll think she has nothing to do but to ask us again."

"If it becomes too annoying, we must move, and take our chance of what we shall find elsewhere; but in the meantime, I have particular reasons for not wishing to move at present."

"What reasons, mamma?" inquired Ellen and Caroline, with one voice.

"Because," said Mrs. Rivers, "I have some hopes that we may not be obliged to remain in this neighbourhood much longer."

"Oh, mamma!" cried the girls, clasping their hands, "is there any hope of our getting away from all these horrors?

"I'm not sure, my dears; don't be too sanguine. The truth is, I did not mean to mention it to you, lest I should awaken expectations that may be disappointed; but that excellent Mr. Russell is endeavouring to get your papa released, and he has some prospect of success."

"Oh, Heaven reward him!" cried Caroline, with a fervour, that had Mr. Russell heard her, would have been a fulfilment of her own prayer.

"And what shall we do then, mamma, if he does succeed?" asked Ellen.

"I don't know exactly, my love; your papa says, he is not without hopes that if he were once at liberty, something might happen to improve our situation."

"What could happen?"

"I don't know; he would not tell me; and, indeed, he desired me not to mention it at all, and I did not intend to do it. However, you will now comprehend why I particularly wish to get on here a little longer, till we see if anything will happen to make us more comfortable. It would be exposing ourselves to a great deal of needless inconvenience to move for a short time, besides the additional expense; and as your papa says he shall have to go some distance in the country, he wants us to manage as well as we can, that we may have a little money to give him for the journey."

"Oh, that we will!" cried the girls, in whose young hearts hope was ever ready to spring on the first gleam of sunshine.

"And we'll go to tea with Mrs. Fitzhugh," said Ellen.

"Oh, yes; let us go," said Caroline. "I

suppose she'll ask the man at the public-house to meet us."

"Not quite so bad as that; but I dare say she'll ask Mrs. Wood," said Ellen; "I know they drink tea with each other."

"I dare say the man at the public-house would be just as good company as either of them," said Caroline.

"She'll ask Mr. Longfellow too, I suppose," said Ellen.

"Well, I'm sure I shall not object to him," said Mary.

"Hush!" said Ellen, rising and moving to the door, which she at that moment perceived was partly open. "I thought I heard some one," she said, looking out before she closed it, "and there certainly was somebody."

"Listening to our conversation, I dare say," said Caroline.

"I hope not!" said Mrs. Rivers. "Who do you think it was, Ellen?"

"I don't know," answered Ellen; "but I am sure there was some one."

"It couldn't be Mr. Longfellow, surely?" said Caroline.

"He wouldn't do such a thing," said Mary.

"I don't think he would," said Mrs. Rivers.

"Besides, it was a woman, I'm certain," said Ellen; "I heard her petticoats rustle as she went down the stairs."

"It must have been Harriett," said Mary; "servants have a great deal of curiosity."

"If it was Harriett, I don't think she'll repeat what we said," rejoined Caroline, "for she hates both Mrs. Wood and Mrs. Fitzhugh."

"I hope she wont, for they'd never forgive our comparing them to the man at the public-house," said Ellen.

"We must be more careful for the future," observed Mrs. Rivers, "and always mind that the door is shut when we're talking."

"I remember I opened it a little while ago," said Ellen; "the room was so close, and if one opens the window, there's such a disagreeable smell, and such a noise from those horrid little children playing in the gutter."

The welcome of vulgar people is always noisy and exaggerated; and accordingly, when, on the night appointed for the tea party, Mrs. Rivers and her daughters entered Mrs. Fitzhugh's room, in compliance with a notification that the party was assembled, and tea poured out, that lady flew at them with

an *épanchement* that almost drove them back to the door; testifying, at the same time, an eagerness for their accommodation that was quite embarrassing; whilst Mrs. Wood rose and insisted that Mrs. Rivers should take her seat, which she assured her was much the most comfortablest, and began carrying her own cup and saucer, and piece of crumpet, to another part of the table—a movement which caused a general derangement, in the process of which, Mr. Elias, in his hurry to get out of everybody's way, spilled his tea and dropped his crumpet, misfortunes which covered him with confusion; whilst the dentist, who was an irritable old man, in a brown scratch wig, shewed evident symptoms of losing his temper. At length, however, all this uproar subsided, the table was wiped, and everybody found a seat; and then ensued such a fuss and bustle in distributing the tea and crumpets, and pressing everybody to eat, that for a time all conversation was precluded, a little running dialogue excepted, which was carried on between Mrs. Fitzhugh and Mrs. Wood, on the prices of tea and sugar, and the comparative merits of the various dealers in the neighbourhood; but when this storm of civility was somewhat

allayed, Mrs. Wood took occasion to observe, that "not only groceries, but *w*ittles of all sorts, was exceeding dear," appealing to a pale-faced, wretched-looking, little woman, called Mrs. Twopenny, who occupied the front parlour, and whose husband was a sharper, living by his wits, to confirm her assertion.

"I dare say they are," replied Mrs. Twopenny, "but I buy so little, that I scarcely know."

"That's true," said Mrs. Wood; "your gentleman scarce ever dines in. I suppose he's in some way of business that takes him to the other end of the town?"

"No," replied Mrs. Twopenny; "but he has a great many engagements."

"Engagements!" exclaimed Mrs. Wood. "Oh, fie! a gentleman ought never to have no engagements that takes him away from his lady, should he, Mr. Longfellow?"

"Me, ma'am!" said Mr. Longfellow, in a flurry; "I didn't hear what you said," which only meant that he did not know what to say himself.

"Well," said Mrs. Fitzhugh, who hated her husband because he was old and jealous, "I'm of a different opinion. I think if a man wants

one to be fond of him, he shouldn't be always sticking to one's side like the Siamese twins."

"Women," said Mr. Fitzhugh, "are never satisfied. Whether you stay with 'em or leave 'em, it's all one. If you stay, they get sick of you; if you go, you neglect 'em. I'd as soon live with a tiger as a woman."

"You are hard upon us, sir," said Mrs. Rivers, who thought it was her duty to say something.

"Lord! ma'am, that's nothing!" said Mrs. Fitzhugh. "I wish you could only hear him sometimes, when we're alone. He's upon his behaviour now. For my part, I don't know what he married for; not I!"

"Because I was a fool, and didn't know when I was well off," graciously returned the husband.

"Oh, fie!" cried Mrs. Wood, again; "Oh, fie! Mr. Fitzhugh! But that's always the way with the male seck. They makes angels on us till such time as they've got their ends on us, and then we may go to Old Scratch for what they cares."

"You shouldn't give these here young ladies such a bad opinion of matrimony, Polly," said Mr. Wood. "Don't mind her, Miss," he

added, nudging Caroline's elbow; "she don't mean what she says; she tells me a different story when we're alone!" Whereupon he winked very significantly.

"Hark! there's a double knock at the door," said Mrs. Wood. "I wonder who it can be!" and in order to satisfy herself upon that point, she opened the door to listen. "The girl's asleep, I believe! Haryett! why don't you go to the door? It's a man's voice—Haryett! who is it? what does the gentleman want?"

"Is it anybody wants me?" said Mr. Fitzhugh, who had an eye to business. "I'm at home."

"It's the gentleman as comes to Mrs. Rivers," cried Harriett.

"Oh; we must beg you to excuse us, then," said Mrs. Rivers, rising, and glad of any excuse to get away.

"You're not going to leave us, ma'am?" said Mrs. Fitzhugh.

"No, no, to be sure not!" said Mrs. Wood; "sit still, ma'am! Haryett, fetch a light, and shew the gentleman up here!"

"Oh dear, no; I couldn't think of such a thing," said Mrs. Rivers in a deprecating tone,

whilst the young ladies moved towards the door.

"Why not?" said Mrs. Wood, filling with her own person the vacant space, so that nobody could get out. "I'm sure the gentleman 'll be welcome. The more the merrier, I always say. Walk in, sir, and take a cup of tea! Here," she continued, slapping Mr. Elias on the back, whilst Mr. Russell stood at the door, uncertain whether to advance or retreat, "you bring your cup and saucer over here, Mr. Longfellow; you and I shall be very good neighbours, I warrant!"

Ellen pulled her mamma's dress, and Caroline turned up her eyes beseechingly. "I am very sorry, really," said Mrs. Rivers, "but we have business of importance to talk over with this gentleman, that obliges us to leave you. Good evening!"

"But you wont take away the young ladies from us?" said Mrs. Wood. "Speak up, Mr. Longfellow! don't you let 'em go!"

"No, to be sure!" said Mr. Wood. "Leave 'em, poor things! The young 'uns is always fond of a little gaiety."

But by this time the ladies had escaped

through the door, and, followed by Mr. Russell, were on their way up stairs.

"Well, that's quality manners, I suppose," said Mrs. Wood, resuming her seat.

"They might have waited till the tea was over, I thinks," said Mrs. Fitzhugh.

"It's the most uncivilest thing, ma'am, I ever see done in a gentleman's house," responded Mrs. Wood.

"What for?" said Mr. Fitzhugh; "why shouldn't the people go, if they like it?"

"If so be as they've business, to be sure——" began Mr. Wood.

"Hold *your* tongue, Mr. Wood!" said his wife. "What do you know about manners?"

"Oh, I'm sure they're heartily welcome," said Mrs. Fitzhugh, with a toss. "Their room's as good as their company!"

"That it may easy be, ma'am," said Mrs. Wood. "They're no great shakes after all's said and done. They haven't got nothing to say for themselves, as far as I can see."

"And as for beauty," rejoined Mrs. Fitzhugh, "I don't see any great beauty in them. Their faces are as white as turnips; and as for figure, they're as flat as pancakes!"—two

allegations that nobody could bring against Mrs. Fitzhugh.

"Pooh! pshaw!" said Mr. Fitzhugh; "what do women know about beauty? I should like to know where you'll see three prettier creatures than the daughters? I never fixed in a handsomer set of teeth in my life than they've got in their mouths. Did you look at them?" he added, addressing Mr. Elias and Mr. Wood.

"Beautiful!" said Elias, blushing.

"Two uncommon nice young ladies, as ever I see," said Mr. Wood.

"Hold *your* tongue, Mr. Wood," said his spouse. "What do you know about yóung ladies?"

"I only said what anybody, as has got eyes in their heads, may see," retorted Mr. Wood, plucking up a spirit; "I never see three prettier——"

"Don't tell me!" said Mrs. Wood. "What signifies beauty, I should like to know? What's the use on it? Handsome is as handsome does, I say. Their pretty faces wont boil the pot."

"Just like dolls, *I* think," said Mrs. Fitzhugh, with calm contempt.

"Pooh! pshaw! That's the way with you

women," said Mr. Fitzhugh; "you never can keep from abusing each other."

"Abuse!" cried his wife. "I don't want to abuse them! What should I abuse them for? They're nothing to me, are they? I don't want their acquaintance, I'm sure!"

"Then what did you ask them to tea for?" asked Mr. Fitzhugh.

"Why, out of pity, to be sure! But who was to suppose they'd behave in that sort of way?"

"What sort of way?" inquired Mr. Fitzhugh.

"What sort of way?" reiterated Elias, with considerable animation.

"What sort——" began Mr. Wood, timidly, not liking to be left behind.

"Hold *your* tongue, Mr. Wood, and let me speak."

"I only said——" began Mr. Wood, again.

"You may save yourself the trouble of asking her what she means," said Mr. Fitzhugh. "She dont know herself."

"Dont I!" responded his wife. "Perhaps I know more than you think. Some people look as if butter couldn't melt in their mouths, but they're none the better for that, I fancy."

"What do you mean, ma'am?" said Elias, colouring with indignation.

"Pooh! pshaw!" said the dentist. "What's the use of asking her? Don't you see she's jealous of the handsome young girls?"

"I jealous!" cried Mrs. Fitzhugh, with an hysterical laugh. "I like that, to be sure! What should I be jealous of them for? All I say is, that I see nothing about them more than other people; and as for their behaviour, people that don't choose to shut their eyes could see that as well as me. I suppose Mrs. Wood's jealous, too?"

"To be sure she is!" responded the dentist. "You're both jealous. Why don't you take example by Mrs. Twopenny here, that says nothing about them?"

"I jealous!" cried Mrs. Wood, beginning to fire. "That *is* a good'un! I'll be shot if it arn't! Handsome, indeed! I've seen them as wouldn't change faces with 'em, handsome as they be; and that no longer ago than the last time I looked in the glass."

At this declaration the dentist laughed outright. Mr. Elias hung down his head, and smiled. Even Mr. Wood ventured to look

rather facetious; and Mrs. Twopenny placed her hand before her mouth, and hemmed.

"I'm glad you're amused, I'm sure, ladies and gentlemen," continued the lady, looking round with an air of defiance. "There's nothing like being merry for them as has cause. I likes to see it! Let them laugh as wins, I say; particklar them as is so particklar well off as some people is——" and here she glanced at Mr. Elias and Mrs. Twopenny.

"Pooh!—pshaw!—nonsense, woman!" cried Mr. Fitzhugh. "What have people's circumstances to do with what we're talking about? I say, the girls are handsome girls, and well-behaved girls, and what have you got to say to that?" Mr. Fitzhugh had his rent in his pocket, and was not afraid.

"I!" cried Mrs. Wood. "What should I have to say about the trollops, or the likes of 'em? All I say is, they shan't stay in my house! I'll have no ladies of easy virtue here!"

At this announcement Mr. Elias started from his chair.

"Never mind her!—never mind her! She don't know what she's talking about," said Mr. Fitzhugh. "She's as bad as my wife——"

"Me!" interrupted Mrs. Fitzhugh. "I like that, to be sure! Bring me in—do!"

"I say they shall trundle," continued Mrs. Wood, who had got upon her feet. "I've got my cha*rac*ter to look to."

"Sit down, wife! Sit down, Polly," said Mr. Wood, pulling her gown.

"Hold *your* tongue, Mr. Wood, and don't interrupt me when I'm speaking. You don't know nothing about it. What I say is——"

"Hold *your* tongue, woman!" cried the dentist, clapping his hands to his ears. "God defend me from a woman's clack, when once she's off! I'd sooner live in a steam-engine! What's all this caterwauling about? What have the women done to you, that you can't leave 'em alone? Is it their faults if they're handsome, and we admire them?"

"Oh, admire them, pray, as much as you please!" said Mrs. Fitzhugh. "I've no doubt they'll be very much obliged to you. Perhaps you'd like me to mention it to them," and there was another hysterical laugh.

"To be sure, I shall admire them," said Mr. Fitzhugh, "and you're very welcome to tell them so, if you like. I say, again, they're as handsome, well-behaved young women

as I'd wish to see; and I only wish there was a few more like 'em."

Here Mrs. Fitzhugh, not being able to find any retort she thought sufficiently cutting, suddenly exploded into a violent fit of hysterics, which she had been for some time preparing, in case of an emergency of that nature; in the course of which, as is usual with ladies under such circumstances, she declared herself to be the most miserable and ill-used woman in the world; announcing it as her thorough conviction that she should not survive much longer, as her heart was breaking, &c.; whereupon the dentist quietly arose, and lighting his candle, prepared to retire to bed. Mr. Elias shook hands with him, and, making a bow to the ladies, quitted the room; and Mr. Wood, taking advantage of the bustle, sneaked off, unseen by his wife, whilst Mrs. Twopenny sprinkled the patient's face with the contents of the slop-basin; and Mrs. Wood, snatching a bundle of pens, that lay on the mantel-piece, plunged the feather ends of them into the fire, and applied them to her nose.

As soon, however, as she perceived the gentlemen were gone, she began to recover, and immediately seized the opportunity of

asking the ladies if they did not consider her most cruelly treated, assuring them that what they had seen was nothing to what she had to bear, and that she was certain nobody could put up with it but herself. Mrs. Wood said, "she was certain nobody could;" but comforted her by declaring that she had a great deal to put up with herself; and that, for her part, she believed the men were all alike, and there was not a pin to choose between them. Mrs. Twopenny, who was, in reality, a wretchedly ill-used woman, said nothing, but took advantage of the first favourable moment to wish the ladies good night, and retire to her own solitary apartment; whereupon Mrs. Wood drew her chair to the fire, shook the kettle, to ascertain if there was any hot water in it, and concluded by seriously recommending Mrs. Fitzhugh to take a glass of something warm, "as it was the best thing in the world to settle them fits"—a prescription, however judicious, that we fear was not altogether disinterested.

Thus ended the tea-party; which, having conducted to so happy a termination, we must invite our readers to accompany us into other scenes.

CHAPTER V.

. . . . . "For I am
Only in love with sorrow, never merry;
Wear out the day in telling of sad tales;
Delight in sighs and tears."

MAID'S REVENGE.

"Enfermer le loup dans la bergerie."

"What handsome toys are maids to play with!"

FAIR MAID OF THE INN.

GEORDIE GRAHAM, as he was called—for he was a Scotchman, and had migrafed from over the border—was a tenant on the estate of Sir John Eastlake, a baronet, whose ancestral domain, both from beauty of situation and architecture, formed one of the lions of the north of England. Geordie and his wife, and his son Leonard and his daughter Lucy, lived together on a small farm, out of which

they made a comfortable subsistence in good years, and an indifferent one in bad years. On the whole, however, they contrived to live decently.

"There's something wrong with Leonard," said old Geordie to his wife one day. "The lad's aye maundering about and doing nothing. He was to have taken a load of hay to the minister's to-day, and I'm blest if he's ever put a finger to it. I don't know what his head's running on, not I."

"His head's running on Jesse Matthieson," answered his wife Hannah.

"Where's the good o' thinking of such a light o' love as she?" said Geordie.

"That's a question boys and girls forget to ask themselves when they fall in love," answered Hannah. "All they think of 's the pretty faces, poor things."

"She'll never make him a steady wife, if he gets her," said Geordie.

"Ah, I don't know that," said the old woman; "Jessie's fond of Leonard in her heart, though she is light and foolish sometimes. I shouldn't wonder if she was to take up, by and bye. Many a woman's steadied by matrimony."

"It's ill trusting to that chance," said Geordie. "I wish Leonard would have no more to say to her."

"He wont do that for our asking," replied Hannah. "In respect of marriage, every man likes to choose for himself, and he bears his ills, when they come, all the better. Leonard must take his own way."

"You'll spoil that lad, Hannah; you're too fond of letting him have his own way."

"Where's the use of crossing him, poor fellow? Young men will be young men, and he's no worse than the rest. You can't say Leonard's anywise dissipated, nor extravagant, nor given to bad company."

"I don't say he is," answered Geordie; "but——"

"But what?"

"Why, Leonard's not steady—he's unsettled, somehow; he wants a tighter hand—he gives way too much."

"Gives way to what?"

"Why, to any havers that take him. Leonard's a lad that don't know how to put up with crosses."

"Pooh, pooh! how should he, poor fellow? Leonard is but two-and-twenty. You can't

put old heads on young shoulders. You forget when you were young yourself, Geordie."

"Na, na; I don't," said Geordie; "but there's a time for work and a time for play. I was aye steady at my work. But what's come o' Lucy this long day?"

"Lucy's up to the Castle, with the shirts my lady gave her to make, and I suppose they're keeping her there while she gets more."

"Ay, ay, Lucy's a handy girl; and she's steady. Lucy's a good, steady lass."

"Lucy's very well, if you don't spoil her."

"Lucy's not a lass that's easy spoiled," said the old man. "She's a modest girl, Lucy is; she has a humble spirit."

"Lucy likes her own way as well as another," said Hannah.

"And why not?" said Geordie. "Lucy has sense to guide herself, as well as any girl I know."

"Lucy's too fond of a red coat. She'd ha' shewn more sense if she'd listened to Farmer Grange—a man with a good house over his head, and a good farm at his back."

"But if the lass no likes him?" said Geordie. "You wouldn't ha' her marry a man she don't like?"

"People should try to like what's for their good," said Hannah.

"We don't know what's for our good," said Geordie. "We're poor, short-sighted creturs."

"We know a full barn's better than an empty one," answered Hannah, "and a well-doing farmer's better than a pennyless red-coat."

"If William Bell's father had been an honest man, William would have had no need to wear a red coat," said Geordie.

"But he wasn't an honest man," answered Hannah.

"Mayhap, that's o'ermuch to say," replied Geordie. "He wasn't a prudent man; that's past a doubt. And though soldiering's a bad trade—nobody can gainsay that—we're bound not to forget that William put on his red coat to help his mother."

"He'd better have stayed at home and worked for her."

"Perhaps he had, in the long run. But the money he got was a great help then, and kept her out of the workhouse till she'd time to get back her health and look about."

"Well, everybody has a right to choose for

themselves—all I say is, that since he's gone soldiering, he's no husband for Lucy."

"But if the girl can't fancy anybody else?"

"That's just what I say, Geordie; you encourage her in it. If you told her at once, out firm, that you'd never consent to her marrying a soldier, she'd turn her thoughts to somebody else, perhaps."

"I can't do that," said Geordie; "it wouldn't go with my conscience. I never made objections whilst William's father was alive, and we thought the lad was well to do; and I can't pick holes in his coat now, because he's poor. Besides, good conduct tells everywhere, and they say William's making friends in the regiment, and is like to be made a corporal soon—then perhaps he'll get to be a serjeant—and who knows? Some of 'em get on to be made officers. I had a cousin that got up to be a lieutenant, and wore an epaulet on his shoulder; but he went to the wars with Sir James Graham, and was killed fighting by his chief."

"Perhaps," said Hannah, rather dazzled by the image of the epaulet, "perhaps William wouldn't think of Lucy, then?"

"Wouldn't he?" said Geordie. "Na, na,

I'll answer for Willie. Willie's not one of that sort, I'll be bail."

At this period of the conversation, the thoughts of the interlocutors were turned into another direction, by the appearance of Leonard, who was seen walking up the little garden in front of the house, in a listless manner, with his eyes bent on the ground, and his hands in his pockets.

"There he comes," said Geordie, "looking down upon the earth, as if he was counting the pebbles as he walked along."

"Don't say anything to him," said Hannah. "When he's vexed, it only makes him worse, if you take notice."

"Where's the minister's hay now?" said Geordie, as his son entered the room.

"I forgot it, father," said Leonard, suddenly looking up, as if awakened from a dream. "I'll load the cart and go with it directly."

"It's too late now," said Geordie. "The coachman has been up about it, and he's got enough away with him to last to-night, and I promised you'd be down with it early in the morning. But I wish, lad, you'd be more thoughtsome. You're aye forgetting one thing or another."

Leonard attempted no defence to this accusation; his countenance only assumed a more melancholy cast, as he walked to the window, and, leaning his forehead against it, looked vacantly out. His father eyed him silently, and shook his head, whilst Mrs. Graham frowned and winked at her husband, as much as to say, "leave him alone."

By and bye, the old man left the room; and then, after a while, Leonard turned from the window, and throwing himself into a chair, said, "Mother, I've a mind to go for a soldier, like Willie."

"You go for a soldier, Leonard!" exclaimed his mother, dropping the stocking she was knitting into her lap. "Never! that you never shall, whilst I live. What's put that in your head?"

"Why, mother, what's the use of my staying here? I shall never do any good. What father says is true enough; I'm always forgetting one thing or another."

"Pooh, pooh! He don't mean what he says. Did anybody ever hear the like; wanting to go for a soldier, because you forgot the parson's hay?"

"But it's true, mother, what father says;

and I know the best thing for me would be to go away from this. I shall never be happy here, that's certain."

"All along of Jessie Matthieson, eh! Pooh, Leonard! that's what all boys and girls think when they're in love. By and bye, you'll be man and wife, and then you'll laugh at all these notions. Everybody has their turn of it whilst they're young. I remember when your father was ready to cut his throat because I wouldn't say *yes* just when he wanted me."

"No, mother; Jessie and I shall never be man and wife. I wouldn't marry any girl that could go on as Jessie does, though I broke my heart for her."

"Well, Leonard, but if you have made up your mind to have nothing more to say to Jessie, why don't you turn your thoughts to somebody else? Besides, that would vex her. There's Bessy Willis,—couldn't you fancy Bessy? I'm sure she's a prettier girl than Jessie, and her father's got together a good bit of money, they say."

"He may keep it, for me," said Leonard.

"Well, there's Jane Watson——"

"Oh, mother, don't!" said Leonard, interrupting her. "What are Jane Watson or

Bessy Willis to me? I don't want to hear anything about them."

"I'll speak to Jessie myself," said Hannah. "I don't think the girl means any harm—I really believe it's only her thoughtless way."

"No, no; say nothing to her, mother. She'd only think I set you on, and I don't choose that.

"If," continued he, after a silence of some minutes, for his mother was at a loss what further consolation or advice to offer,—"if she was giving me up for any honest young fellow, that meant to marry her, and make her a good husband, I should be disappointed, to be sure, and I don't say but what it might cost me some pain to see her go to church with another man; but I could excuse her and forgive her, and I should wish her well, I'm sure I should, however unhappy she might have made me; but what can she expect will come of this? Will Sir John marry her?

"To be sure he won't—she knows that very well. I believe, in my heart, she only does it to tease you."

"No, mother, it's her vanity — it's her pride—I don't believe she cares for him, I will say that for her—but she can't help

giving him encouragement, though she knows she's making me miserable. However, I've done with her!

"She should remember poor Bessy Lee. He'll serve her the same, if she don't look well to herself," said Hannah.

"He'd better not," said Leonard, with a countenance in which a host of passions were suddenly lighted—"he'd better not—if ever—if ever—if I thought—but no, mother, I've too good an opinion of Jessie, for that. Jessie's vain and thoughtless, but she has spirit and pride. I don't forget what she said when Bessy Lee died; she said that if she had been her sister, she'd have shot him, woman as she is."

"Come, light the candles, woman," said Geordie, re-entering the room. "Isn't that girl, Lucy, come in yet? It's late for her to be out alone."

"Where is Lucy, mother?"

"She went up to the Castle with her work this morning, and she's never come back. I suppose my lady kept her there."

"You had better put on your hat and go and meet her, Leonard," said the old man; "it's getting dark."

Leonard was preparing to obey his father's commands, when the door opened, and Lucy herself appeared, accompanied by Jessie. Lucy looked grave, and not very well pleased; but the countenance of her companion was gay and triumphant.

Leonard started at the sight of Jessie, and rising from his seat, he accosted her with a constrained air.

"You're late, girl," said Geordie to his daughter. "I was just sending Leonard to look for you."

"Oh, there was no need of that, Mr. Graham," said Jessie, "when Lucy was under my protection."

"My lady kept me doing little jobs of work, all day," answered Lucy.

"So I undertook to see her safe home," said Jessie. "Wasn't that very kind of me, Leonard?"

"Then you were working for her ladyship, too, I suppose?" said Leonard.

"Oh, no, I wasn't," answered Jessie, pertly. "I was working for his lordship."

"Indeed!" said Leonard, with assumed indifference.

"That's something new," observed Mrs. Graham.

"Isn't it?" said Jessie, looking very provoking, as well as very pretty.

"The less dealings you have with him, the better for you, my lass," said Geordie.

"What for, Mr. Graham?" said Jessie. "Is there any harm in making nets, more than in making shirts?"

"Take care you're not the first to be caught in your nets, yourself," said Geordie. "You're a thoughtless lass, Jessie Matthieson—that's what you are."

"Well, that's pretty compliments I'm getting in return for my kindness in taking such good care of Lucy. And pray have you nothing civil to say to me, Mr. Leonard?"

"You don't want any of my civilities, Miss Matthieson," said Leonard.

"Oh, upon my word, Mr. Leonard, you're too polite," said Jessie.

"Pooh! pooh! children, can't you talk without quarrelling?" said Mrs. Graham.

"I'm sure, I'm not quarrelling, ma'am," said Jessie.

"But you're aggravating, lass, you're aggravating," said Geordie; "that's worse—a deal worse, for a man don't know how to take it."

"Nobody need take it at all," said Jessie. "I'm sure I thought I was doing a civil turn in seeing Lucy safe home, because she's timid, and I'm not. But if everything I say gives offence, I'd better go."

"There's no offence that I know of, lass, on either side," said Geordie. "But good counsel's bitter to them that can't stomach it."

"Leave Jessie alone, Geordie," said Mrs. Graham. "Advice never does good to them that don't seek it."

"That's true, I believe," said Geordie—"more's the pity."

"Well, I believe I must be going," said Jessie, for the conversation was taking a turn that rather left her in the rear.

"And how's good Mrs. Matthieson, Jessie?" said Mrs. Graham, wishing to conciliate, for Leonard's sake, who she knew would be miserable after the girl was gone.

"Mother's well," said Jessie.

"Jessie has bought her mother such a nice

warm shawl," said Lucy. "It's pretty, too, as well as warm."

"That was like a good girl," said Geordie.

"Well, Mr. Graham," said Jessie, "then you see if I do work for the squire, I don't make a bad use of my earnings."

"I'm glad of it, lass," replied Geordie; "but for all that, I wouldn't have you have o'er much to say to Sir John. He's no good acquaintance for the like o' you!"

"Oh, you needn't be afraid of me, Mr. Graham! I know how to take care of myself, quite well, I assure you."

"I'm glad of it, lass," said Geordie, drily.

"Well, I must be going," said Jessie, again, rising from her seat, and pinning her shawl. Leonard rose, too, and stood still, as if he did not know what to do. Jessie lingered about, first looking over Lucy, who was already seated at her work, and then examining the contents of Mrs. Graham's knitting-basket. "Well, good bye!" she said, going towards the door.

"Ain't you going to walk home with Jessie, Leonard?" said Hannah. Leonard took down his hat.

"Oh, I'm not afraid of going alone," said

Jessie, although she had been lingering expressly in hopes of his offering to accompany her. Leonard hesitated.

"It's not proper you should go alone, lass, at this time of night," said Geordie. "It isn't what we owe to your mother, to let you."

"Oh, very well; if I musn't go alone, then of course, somebody must go with me—so good night, Mrs. Graham; good night, Lucy!" and she opened the door and stepped out, whilst Leonard still stood with an air of irresolution.

"Well, Leonard," said his mother, "ain't you going?"

"She don't want my company," said Leonard. "What's the use of my going?"

"To take care of her," said Geordie. "She's o'er thoughtless to take care of herself."

"Go, Leonard!" said Lucy. "She's foolish; but you make her worse than she would be."

"Oh, I'll go, if you think I ought," said Leonard, and in his heart desiring nothing better; he hastened after Jessie, who was, by this time, half-way down the garden.

"Lord! how you frightened me," she said,

pretending to start as he joined her. "I couldn't think who it was."

"My father and mother desired me to follow you," said he. "They don't think it right you should go alone."

"Oh, they're very good, I'm sure; but it's a great pity you should have the trouble."

For some time they walked on in silence, till Jessie stumbling over a stone, and declaring the night was very dark, gave Leonard an excuse for offering her his arm, which she took—a symptom of good fellowship which had not for some time occurred between them. The effect was beneficial on both; his heart was softened as he felt her leaning upon him, and so was hers by the support he lent her. Almost insensibly she leaned more heavily, and almost insensibly he pressed her arm more closely to his side. He began involuntarily to condemn her less, and to take some blame to himself; whilst she went further, and admitted to herself that the fault of their alienation was entirely her own, and that, after all, she loved him dearly. Still they walked on in silence, for a remnant of pride on either side rendered the introduction of the subject they were each thinking of difficult. Each

wished the other would break the ice. Jessie's mother kept one of the lodges of Eastlake Park, and they had thus proceeded about half way, their hearts melting as they went, though their tongues were silent, when they heard a foot approaching. They couldn't distinguish the person, but whether accidentally, or whether from a suspicion who it was, and under the uncontrollable influence of the demon of flirtation, Jessie gave a slight cough.

"Jessie," said a voice, immediately.

"Yes, sir," said Jessie.

Instantly Leonard dropped her arm; and, without uttering a word, turned round, and strode home as fast as if he had a pair of seven-league boots on. As his father and mother, and Lucy, were gone to their bedrooms, he had, fortunately, no questions to answer; so he lighted his candle, and retired to his—there to tumble, and toss, and think — to form wild resolutions, and strange schemes of vengeance—but not to sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

"Nor, great lord,
Make me not bold with death and deeds of ruin,
Because they fear not you; me they must fright;
Then am I best in health."

WOMEN BEWARE WOMEN.

——— "And by her virtue learn to square
And level out your life; for to be fair
And nothing virtuous, only fits the eye
Of gaudy youth and swelling vanity."

THE FAITHFUL SHEPHERDESS.

"Es hilft nicht viel dem Tauben sprechen."

TIECK.

ANOTHER month had passed over the heads of the young lovers, and the end of it found Leonard still in the same unhappy condition; jealous and miserable; one day, resolving to give up all thoughts of Jessie—tear her from his heart—treat her with the scorn she merited—

mortify her with his contempt, and even bestow his attentions and his affections elsewhere; another, deciding that all this was beyond his power; and that, as there never could be any happiness or peace for him at home, the only thing that was left for him was to go for a soldier, and get his brains knocked out as soon as he could—and then again, visions of vengeance would present themselves to his imagination; but these he sought to banish. As for Jessie, she was still playing the same game with the baronet; flirting and dressing at him, doing everything she could to *agacer* and entice him; and, in short, giving him encouragement enough to *keep him on*, without, as she thought, any peril to herself.

But Sir John was not used to these slow courtships. He had been accustomed to carry such affairs by a *coup de main*, especially amongst his tenantry, and he was beginning to be weary of love-making, and his attentions were beginning to slacken. Jessie saw it, but she determined to shew the utmost indifference, and to let him and the world—that is, her world, the world of the neighbouring village—see that she cared nothing about him, and that she had only been amusing herself with

his admiration, and laughing in her sleeve at his designs. She thought she was strong enough to do this, for she really did not love him, and she began it bravely. Sir John set her down as a little coquette; and, as his was a sort of love that could not exist a day without hope, he soon found himself ceasing to think of her, and in pursuit of a new object, and this object was no other than Lucy Graham. On the evening described in our last chapter, happening to be without company, and finding his time somewhat heavy on his hands, he had lounged towards the Lodge, to look out for Jessie, and presently he saw her come out with Lucy, who had called there on her way from the Castle. He contrived an excuse for accosting the girls, and then joining them, walked by their side till they came within sight of the village. Lucy hung down her head, made him short answers when he addressed her, and walked apart as much as she could. However, although it was dusk, he did not fail to remark her light, graceful figure, and neat attire, and he ascertained, by a peep under her bonnet, that she was very pretty. He attempted a little *badinage*, but she received it so coldly, that he desisted, but now that

Jessie had failed him, and that he was out of employment, he thought upon Lucy, and began to feel himself attracted in that quarter. But Lucy was extremely inaccessible. She had always, indeed, systematically, kept out of his way, for she was a high-minded and a prudent girl; besides which, she was seriously in love with her young soldier, and she abhorred the baronet's unprincipled proceedings. Hitherto, she had succeeded in avoiding him, because he had not sought her; but now that he was bent on making her acquaintance, it was not so easy. His situation gave him great advantages. He could make various excuses for calling at her father's, and with still more facility he could intrude himself into his mother's apartments, where Lucy, being a superior needle-woman, was often engaged at work. She had been employed to make him some shirts, and now he found out that the collars and wristbands required a great deal of alteration; and as for the buttons, both of his shirts and waistcoats, they were eternally coming off, and he perpetually found it necessary to go to the room where Lucy worked, to get them sewn on again.

However, he could not long conceal from

himself that all his schemes and assiduities were likely to be utterly unproductive. He made no progress at all. Lucy never so much as bestowed a smile on him; and so far from being flattered by his attentions, as Jessie had been, was evidently annoyed by them. This was something quite new to him. It awakened his curiosity, and occupied his thoughts, and acted as a much more effective provocative than Jessie's *agaceries*. He had found out that *she* was duping him, but Lucy's resistance he saw was honest. She was no coquette; her virtue was genuine, and her mind was pure; and therefore, lowly as her condition was, she gathered consequence in his eyes, and became a conquest worth making; and, as the only road to success was through her heart, he must try to win it,—an enterprise that, if he gave his mind to it, he thought he could not fail to succeed in. And, indeed, it must be admitted that he had not a bad stock in trade to begin with. Besides his rank and his wealth, he was a man in the prime of life, with a very handsome person, great animal spirits and good humour, and, as he flattered himself, considerable experience in the mysteries of the female heart. But in this last par-

ticular he was mistaken. He had had extensive dealings in the department of female vanity, but little traffic with hearts. However, he commenced his undertaking as artistically as he could. He threw off his confident air, which he had discernment enough to perceive was especially offensive to Lucy, and treated her with consideration and respect; his attentions became more delicate and refined; he contrived to sigh occasionally, with great judgment, and to look melancholy in season; and his pursuit of her, though no less ardent and evident to her, became less ostentatious and presuming.

In the meanwhile, something like a reconciliation had been growing up betwixt Leonard and Jessie. As soon as the young man perceived that the baronet's attentions had slackened, he began to lift up his desponding head and breathe again, and immediately set down the retreat to the account of Jessie's impregnable virtue.

"Didn't I always tell you she loved you in her heart?" said his mother; "and that she wasn't such a light o' love as Geordie would have it she was."

"I believe both father and I have been too

hard upon poor Jessie," said the comforted Leonard. "Still, I never did think it was anything but pride—I never thought she cared for him."

"So much the worse, lad," said Geordie. "There was the less excuse for her giving him the encouragement she did."

"I don't see that, father; it would have been much worse if she had been fond of the squire—there's no telling what might have come of it, then."

"It would have been worse for her happiness," said Geordie, "but better for her heart. Trifling with a man in that way, is no credit to any girl."

"I'm sure nobody need pity the squire," said Leonard. "His feelings deserve no consideration — he never considers anybody else's."

"Na, na," said Geordie, "nobody pities the squire; and it's no in that point of view I look at it."

"In whatever point of view you look at it," said Hannah, "it's a good thing it's over, and she's sent him off with a flea in his ear."

"No doubt o' that," said Geordie.

"I'm blest," said Hannah to her husband,

by and bye, when Leonard had left the room, "if I don't think, Geordie, you're more sorry than glad that Jessie's clear of the squire."

"Na, na," said Geordie, "you're wrong there, woman; but I'd be more glad if I saw Leonard clear of Jessie."

"That would be very hard on the girl, when she's turned off the squire for him."

"Fie, woman! to hear you talk one 'ud think there was no difference betwixt an honest suitor and a paramour."

"Well, Geordie, it's fine talking for you men, that are never put into temptation as we women are; but it's a great trial to a girl's virtue, let me tell you, to be courted by a man like the squire—more shame for them that try us."

"That's true, wife. I've no mind to be hard upon Jessie—only, I wish Leonard was quit of her—that's all."

For a short time, however, after the baronet's secession, Geordie's wish did not seem likely to be realized. Leonard and Jessie were daily more together; she, proud of her virtue and her triumph, was good-humoured and friendly with him, and he was beginning to look cheer-

ful and happy; and as Lucy, so far from being inclined to boast of the baronet's pursuit, was ashamed of it, and did all she could to conceal it, it was, at first, not suspected. But the fact of her being already superseded in the squire's favour, could not long be hidden from Jessie, and we regret to say that she did not quite like it."

"So, Mrs. Lucy," she said, one day, "with all your prim behaviour, you've no objection to a lover, more than other folks, I see."

"What lover do you mean, Jessie?" asked Lucy.

"What lover do I mean? That's a good 'un! You think folks are blind, I suppose."

"I'm sure, I'm very sorry there's anything to see," said Lucy, blushing.

"Oh, I dare say!" replied Jessie. "Let those believe that that like."

"I can't help it, if you wont believe it, Jessie."

"Well, I don't," replied Jessie; "because I don't believe it's in the nature of any girl."

"Then I'm sure you can have no love for Leonard, Jessie."

"Oh, as for that, I think Leonard ought to

have been very proud of having the squire in love with me, instead of making such a fuss about it."

"Love!" said Lucy; "I wouldn't give a button for such love as his. It's queer love that can change from one to another so quick. Much love he could have had for you!"

"Perhaps he'd more than you think," said Jessie, whose susceptible vanity began to take umbrage.

"He's not very constant, at any rate," said Lucy.

"Perhaps that's my fault," answered Jessie. "Maybe, he'd have been more constant if I'd liked; and you might have had no chance at all, Miss Lucy."

"Well, Jessie, that wouldn't have broken my heart. But I don't believe you, or anybody else, could make him constant."

"Take care I don't try," said Jessie.

"No," said Lucy, turning on her an alarmed look, "pray don't, Jessie. Don't have any more to say to him, there's a good girl—don't, for poor Leonard's sake!"

"And for poor Lucy's sake, I suppose?"

"No indeed, Jessie—but sure you're not jealous?"

"Me jealous!" cried Jessie, with an affected laugh; "that's a good 'un!"

"You've no occasion, Jessie; that I can assure you. If he will follow me about, and torment me, I can't help it; but he'll never get any encouragement from me; that he may rely on."

In this assurance Lucy was perfectly sincere, but, unfortunately, Jessie, judging others by herself, did not believe it; more especially when she saw the baronet's persevering attention and increasing devotion. She began to think that she had played her own game very ill—that she had been over hasty in letting him see that she had no intention of rewarding his assiduities; and that by a little more tact she might have had the glory of exhibiting him still in her train. The silly village girls, too, especially the ugly ones, who had been envious of the favour she had enjoyed, began to taunt her as soon as they found she had a successor; and, without giving her credit for the virtue they would have despised her for losing, they affected to think she had been cast off—eclipsed by Lucy's superior charms. But in vain Jessie threw herself in the baronet's way;

in vain she braided her raven hair, trimmed her bonnet with pink ribbons, and wore her most becoming dress; and in vain she shewed her white teeth, affecting to be in an ecstasy of merriment, when he passed the lodge, at the sports of the litter of puppies he had sent there to be nursed. When she ran to open the gate for him with an alacrity that would, a few weeks before, have been repaid with a bright smile, and "That's my pretty Jessie," he rode through as regardlessly as if her old mother had opened it; whilst, on the contrary, from her situation, she could not help being a witness to his thousand-and-one daily contrivances to meet Lucy and attract her attention.

Jessie got out of all patience; she did not acknowledge the truth of the axiom, that "virtue is its own reward," at all—on the contrary, she thought she had been much more happy when her virtue was considered to be in great peril, and all the world was condemning her imprudence. She felt extremely angry with everybody who had warned her of her danger, and tried to frighten her into propriety; and especially with Leonard, whom, in her mind, she accused

of having been absurdly jealous and tyrannical; and instead of feeling that in getting rid of the baronet's attentions she had been relieved of an evil, she fancied she had been foolishly persuaded to relinquish a treasure, of which Lucy had immediately possessed herself; and, in the excess of her mortification, she even conjectured that all Lucy's good advice and expostulations had been bestowed with the treacherous view of stepping into her shoes—for there is nothing too extravagant for jealousy to believe. Her good temper and cheerfulness vanished; and poor Leonard found himself once more at a discount without understanding why.

Lucy now avoided, as much as possible, all errands to the Castle; when she had work entrusted to her at home, she sent Leonard with it when it was done; when she was obliged to go there herself, she endeavoured to select occasions when she knew, by some means or other, that Sir John was out; and altogether she confined herself to her own home as much as she could.

By means of these precautions she had contrived to disappoint the baronet's schemes, and

keep herself for nearly a fortnight out of his way, when one day she received a message desiring her to go immediately to the Castle. The envoy was Mr. Groves, Sir John's valet, but the message was from Lady Eastlake. Mr. Groves said he happened to be coming that way, and had offered to bring it. Lucy made some difficulties, but he told her, my lady wanted her particularly, so she could not well refuse. She therefore put on her bonnet, and prepared to obey. There were two ways to the Castle—one was by the open road, the other lay through lanes and copses. Ever since she had become aware of Sir John's designs, she had always made a point of going by the former, because meeting him there was much less obnoxious than in a more retired path. However, as from the circumstance of the message being brought by Mr. Groves, she thought it highly probable that the baronet was aware of it, and that he would contrive to throw himself in her way, she hoped she should disappoint him, by taking the other, where he would not expect to meet her; and this she did, but with less success than she had expected; for Groves, who was entirely in Sir John's confidence, and who had not neglected

to communicate to him the errand he was going on, happening to observe the road she took, set off instantly as fast as he could to intercept his master, and arrived just in time to send him in the right direction.

CHAPTER VII.

"Tell him my honour shall have a rich name,
When several harlots shall share his with shame."
THE REVENGER'S TRAGEDY.

"None lives so pure
But shall be soil'd with slander."
IBID.

"La langue des femmes est leur épée, et elles ne la laissent pas rouiller."

THINKING she had pretty surely secured herself from annoyance by her stratagem, Lucy set out on her expedition, with a mind engrossed by a much more interesting object than Sir John Eastlake or his addresses. She had that morning received a letter from her dear William, full of the warmest professions of enduring love,—a love that she well knew to be sterling, pure, and true,—and concluding with

the agreeable information that he hoped soon to be made a corporal, and that he thought, when that happened, his situation would be so much improved, that they might venture to be married; more especially as he had "strong hopes that his promotion would not stop there." And he was not without very reasonable grounds for his expectation. William was not only an excellent soldier, but he was really a superior young man. His father had once been a flourishing farmer, and although he had died a beggar, he had, before the evil days overtook him, given his son a very respectable education; and as the young man had a love for reading, he had improved on what he got. His literary taste had refined his manners, and had kept him from falling into the habits and amusements of his comrades; so that these qualities, together with the additional advantage of a very handsome person, had rendered him a general favourite with his officers, who were pretty universally agreed, that when William Bell sat at the mess-table, which it seemed tolerably certain he one day would, that he would not disgrace it.

So happy in these reflections, that the very

existence of her persecutor, and everything connected with him, had vanished from her mind, Lucy, with a foot as light as her heart, was proceeding on her way to the Castle, when she was startled by a voice close to her elbow, saying, "Ah, my shy bird, have I limed you at last?" and immediately she felt the baronet's arm round her waist. He had intercepted her by a cross path, and was at her side before she was aware of his approach. She almost screamed from the suddenness of this address; but commanding herself, she said, gravely and as calmly as she could, "I'm going to your mother, sir. My lady has sent for me, and I'm in a hurry."

"Not in so great a hurry, I hope, my pretty Lucy, that you cannot bestow a few minutes to comfort my mother's son!"

"I can't stop, indeed, sir. My lady wants me for something very particular."

"How can you be so hard-hearted to me, Lucy, when you know how I love you?"

"Oh no, sir; you don't love me!"

"But I do, though! I'll be d—d if I don't!"

"Well, sir, it's not my place to dispute

with you; but if you do, I'm sorry for it, because it's of no use."

"Now, Lucy, that's cruel! You'll drive me to despair!

"Oh, sir, the despair you'll feel about me will never do you any harm."

"Indeed, Lucy, you're mistaken. It has done me a great deal of harm already. All my friends remark how out of spirits I am."

"You must think me a very vain, silly girl, sir, to believe such nonsense."

"Indeed, Lucy, I don't. I think you a very sensible, charming girl, as well as a very pretty one; and it's that makes me so fond of you. I assure you, Lucy, I have a very high opinion of you."

"I'm sure, sir, you don't go the way to shew it."

"I don't agree with you there, Lucy; how could I shew it better than by loving you?"

"I'm sure, sir, as I said before, if you didn't think me very foolish, you wouldn't expect to please me by talking in that way."

"In what way, my dear Lucy? I'm sure I wouldn't offend you for the world. What do I say that displeases you?"

"It displeases, me, sir, to hear you talk in such an unbecoming manner. They're things not fit for you to say, nor for me to hear, and I'll thank you, sir, to let me go."

"No, Lucy; I've waited too long for this opportunity to do that, and I cannot part with you till we come to a better understanding."

"Then that will be never, sir."

"Well then, Lucy, we shall never part, that's all."

"Oh, sir, for shame! I must beg you'll let me go."

"Shame!" Why what shame is there in loving a pretty girl?"

"I'm sure, sir, it's not like a gentleman to persecute a young woman that has nobody to protect her."

"You want nobody to protect you when I'm near you, Lucy. I only wish you'd let me protect you."

"I don't want your protection, sir. All I ask is, that you'd leave me alone."

"Now, what can be so cruel as that? You've robbed me of my heart, and now you want to shake me off. What am I to do without my heart, Lucy?"

"I don't believe you have one, sir, or else you'd behave with more feeling."

"It's because I've too much feeling, Lucy, that I offend you. If I didn't love you I shouldn't persecute you, as you call it."

"If you did love me, sir, you wouldn't go on in this way, when you see how unhappy it makes me. Some girls may like it, sir, and you may have been used to such, and you judge me by them. But I don't like it, sir, and I never shall like it, and I wish you'd give it up."

"Indeed, Lucy, I don't judge you by other girls. I know you're very different, and it's that difference makes me so fond of you. I dare say you're thinking of Jessie Matthieson, and, no doubt, you've formed a very bad opinion of my taste, from seeing me take notice of her—a vain, silly, forward girl like that. But I give you my word I never cared a whistle for Jessie, but she would throw herself in my way, and when a girl does that, a man is sometimes led into what he never intended."

"Well, sir, I only wish Jessie heard you; it would be a lesson to her for the rest of her life."

"It's what girls must expect that are so

forward, Lucy; and, as I said before, it's because you are so different that I love you."

"You love me just as you loved Jessie, sir; and if you were to talk about it till Christmas you'd never persuade me it was anything different."

"Upon my soul, you wrong me! you do indeed, and yourself too, to suppose such a thing. I never was so fond of a girl in my life as I am of you. You've bewitched me, you little rogue, that you have! and I'll make you believe it before I've done with you yet."

"It's not worth your while to take the trouble, sir; for if I did believe it, it would not make the least difference; and I hear a horse's foot—there's somebody coming, and if you wont leave me alone, and let me go, I'll call out for help, I will indeed, sir; and if you make me bring such a disgrace on you and myself, I can't help it—it's your own fault."

The horseman was approaching—there was no telling who it might be—perhaps some respectable *père de famille* amongst the neighbouring gentry, in which case the appeal Lucy threatened would not be altogether agreeable, so the baronet yielded to her struggles, and allowed her to escape; and greatly indeed he

felt disposed to say, as she fled from him with all her speed, "Go, and be d——d!" for he was really irritated and out of humour, both with himself and her. A moderate degree of virtue and resistance was only *appétissant*, augmenting the pleasure and glory of a conquest, which he had been accustomed, generally, to find too easy; but this austere virtue of Lucy's was something he was not prepared for. He could not flatter himself that he had made the slightest impression on her—he had not gained an inch of ground, and he began to fear that the fort was impregnable, and that he should be obliged to submit to an inglorious retreat. To be subject to two successive failures of this description was really mortifying —the laurels were dropping from his brow. He had not cared much for the disappointment Jessie had inflicted on him—it had been done in a much less mortifying manner; indeed, in that drama, he had rather played the part of the forsaker than the forsaken—tired of being trifled with, and lured by encouragement that produced no fruits, he had withdrawn; besides, his fancy had been caught by Lucy, and the new pursuit extinguished all interest in the old. But now his thoughts re-

verted to his first disappointment; he multiplied them together, and each added to the sum of the other, so that both united formed a very considerable amount of mortification. He felt quite spiteful and angry, and although a really good-humoured man in the main, the desire for victory which urged him to pursue his enterprise began rather to take the colour of revenge than love, or the passion that he was in the habit of dignifying by that title.

Lucy was out of sight—the horseman had proved to be one of his own grooms—and Sir John was strolling on with his eyes on the ground, and his arms behind his back, cogitating on these thorny themes, when he heard a little cough—it was not the first time he had heard that little cough—so he turned sharply round, and there he saw, a few yards behind him, exactly what he had expected to see—namely, Jessie Matthieson, looking extremely modest and unconscious, and as if she had coughed because she could not help it—forced to it by an intolerable titillation in her throat—she even put her hand before her mouth and coughed again, after he had turned round and was standing still, waiting for her to come up, in order to prove that that was the case; and

when she did come up to him, she evidently shewed that she had not the slightest intention whatever of stopping to speak to him, or the slightest desire to attract his attention. So far from entertaining any such designs, she conducted herself with the most exemplary propriety—dropping a demure, timid, little curtsey as she walked past him, with her eyes bent upon the earth—Lucy herself could not have done it better—indeed, she would not have done it half so well, for it was not in her line.

An involuntary smile relaxed the corners of the baronet's mouth, as he stood aside, and silently allowed her to pass him. On she went, not very fast—never even turning her head to see if he was looking after her—which, however, he was—but every step she advanced rendered the thing more critical—she stooped to pluck a flower from the turf—and presently, feeling it very warm, she took off her bonnet. Jessie had beautiful black hair.

"Jessie!" cried Sir John, stepping after her.

Jessie started—the start was really genuine, for she had just given it up—then she looked to the right and the left, for how should she

know who called? and lastly, she looked in the right direction, which was behind, and then she stopped till Sir John came up to her.

"Did you call, sir?"

"Yes, Jessie, I want to speak to you. I want to know how the puppies are getting on?"

"Very well, indeed, sir."

"That's well—you must take care of them, Jessie, you know, for my sake. Upon my word, Jessie, you're looking very pretty to-day. I must have a kiss before we go any further."

"Oh, no, sir, I'm not pretty."

"Indeed you are, Jessie, and very pretty, too. What has put that in your head?"

"Because I'm sure, sir, you don't think I'm pretty."

"Upon my word, you're mistaken, Jessie; I think you very pretty."

Jessie shook her head, incredulously. "Why, haven't I told you so a hundred times?" said Sir John.

"Ah, sir, but by-gones are by-gones—people change their minds sometimes."

"Well, I haven't changed mine, Jessie; for

I think I never saw you look prettier than you do at this moment."

"Oh, I'm not so pretty as some people, I know."

"Why, who do you mean, Jessie? There's not a prettier girl in the village than Jessie Matthieson, I'm sure!" And here he stole his arm round her waist.

"Oh, sir, you can't deceive me; I have eyes as well as other people."

"Indeed you have, and very pretty ones, too; but what is it you see, Jessie? Come, tell me."

"I see that gentlemen like you are not to be depended upon; and that you're sometimes all for one person, and then all for another."

"All things to all women, eh, Jessie?" said Sir John, laughing.

"I'm sure, sir," replied Jessie, not quite pleased with the indifference the laugh betrayed, "it's lucky for me I did not believe all the fine things you said to me."

"But they were true, Jessie; they were, I assure you."

"Oh, yes, I dare say! Till you got somebody else to say them to!"

"But, Jessie, you know, you turned me off. What's a man to do? You wouldn't have anything to say to me."

"Oh, sir, gentlemen are never at a loss for excuses."

"But it's no excuse at all, Jessie, but the plain truth—you know it is. How could I think you loved me, when you wouldn't do anything to oblige me?"

"I'm sure, sir, I did a great deal more than I ought; everybody in the village was talking against me, for being so much with you."

"D——n everybody in the village! What does it signify what they say? Besides, you know, Jessie, what I asked you to do nobody need ever have known. Groves would have managed all that for us."

"Oh, sir!"

"And Groves is the most faithful fellow alive. He'd sooner cut his tongue out than mention anything that happened." Jessie shook her head. "He is, I assure you; I've trusted him a hundred times—hem! that is, I mean with things of consequence—why, I'd horsewhip the fellow as long as I could stand over him, if he ever dared to breathe a syllable, and he knows it."

"Ah, sir, that's all very well, but what would mother say?"

"What would be the use of her saying anything, Jessie? She wouldn't like to lose her situation, you know. Besides—leave that to me."

"I can't, indeed, sir, I can't."

"Very well, Jessie, if you're determined, you know, why there's an end of it, and there's no more to be said—so, as I'm going home, I'll turn off here, and take the shortest cut. Good bye!"

"Good bye, sir!" said Jessie, ready to explode with a strange compound of incongruous feelings; "I hope you'll be in time to meet Miss Lucy Graham at the Castle!"

"Lucy Graham!" said the baronet; "well, I hope I shall be in time to meet her. Lucy's a very pretty girl, and a very kind girl, too. I'm beginning to be very fond of Lucy."

"Oh, sir, everybody knows that, fast enough. Miss Lucy makes no secret of her conquest. And now, sir, I think you can't deny that I was right not to believe all the fine things you said to me; where should I have been if I had, I should like to know?"

"Oh, but, Jessie, there you wrong me! If

you had been kind to me, I should never have thought of Lucy, or any other girl."

"Ah, you say so now, sir!"

"I only say what's true, Jessie. If you won't believe me, I can't help it."

"How can I believe you, sir?"

"Shall I swear it?"

"Ah, sir, I know very well such gentlemen as you think nothing of what they swear to us poor girls."

"Very well, Jessie, as I said before, if you won't believe me, it's no use my saying any more, so——"

"But I know very well it's not me you're fond of—it's Lucy Graham."

"No, upon my soul!"

"Do you think I don't know you came here to meet her to-day? Didn't I see Mr. Groves take her a message? And didn't she come by the copse on purpose, because she knew you were to be here?"

"And wasn't that very kind of her, Jessie?"

"Ah, Lucy's very deep. She can find fault with other people, and look as innocent as possible all the while, for the very same thing she's doing herself. It's a fine thing to have

such a character for steadiness—people may do whatever they've a mind to, then."

"And you see Lucy does what I ask her," said Sir John, taking Jessie's hand, "but you don't, Jessie."

"But if I did, where would be the use! It's not me you love; it's Lucy."

"Try me, Jessie; you shall see if I don't love you. Come, there's a good girl!" and again he threw his arm round her waist, and pressed her to his bosom—"shall it be to-night? At ten o'clock? Groves shall wait for you in the summer-house, and bring you through the conservatory."

"Mother don't go to bed till ten."

"Well, say half-past ten; but I shall be impatient, Jessie, I shall, indeed!"

Jessie sighed and reflected; or rather, she tried to reflect, but she could not. All she saw was Lucy Graham betwixt her and her lover. She discerned nothing beyond. Lucy's figure shut out from her all the rest.

"But even if I did, you'd still go on with Lucy Graham? I know you would!"

"I wont, indeed!"

"Upon your word?"

"Upon my soul!"

"You'll give her up, and have no more to say to her?"

"You may rely on it I will, from this very hour."

"And if you see her when you get back to the Castle, you won't speak to her?"

"Not a word."

"Nor take any notice of her at all?"

"Not the least."

"Neither now nor ever?"

"Neither now nor ever."

"And, upon your word and honour, will you always love me?"

"Always, upon my word. And now, I think, Jessie, you ought to be satisfied."

"Ah! if I could believe you?"

"Oh!" said he, dropping his arm from her waist, with an offended air, "if you don't believe me now——"

"I didn't say I *didn't* believe you, but——"

"Well, then, we understand each other, and let's say no more about it. At half-past ten Groves shall meet you in the summer-house. And now, good-bye, darling! I've outstayed my time, and must make haste home." And with an embrace and a kiss he left her.

Jessie stood, for some time, like a statue, on the spot where he had quitted her. Think, she could not—she only felt; and even her feelings were of a character so mingled and confused, that it would have been impossible to analyze them. They were demons that seemed to have possession of her; they warred within her; and her heart and brain were the arena where their opposite natures strove. Her heart told her that she did not love Sir John Eastlake, and her natural sagacity told her that he did not love her. She did not believe his professions, she did not believe he would keep his word, she *almost* knew he was duping her. She could not forget the fate of Bessy Lee, who had died under the most melancholy circumstances; but she wilfully threw dust in her own eyes, and cast a glamour over her own understanding. Poor Truth struggled hard to get a hearing, but Jealousy and Vanity made a strong fight. Sometimes, when Truth was getting a little the best of it, she remembered that there yet wanted several hours to ten o'clock, and that she was not obliged to go to the rendezvous when the time came, if she did not like it—she was still free to do as she pleased; then up started Vanity and Jealousy, whispering that

if she broke the appointment, Sir John would assuredly never have anything more to say to her, but would devote himself wholly to Lucy, who, although she pretended not to like his attentions, was clearly as much flattered by them as other people; else, why did she go to meet him in the copse? It was evident that Lucy wanted to cut her out surreptitiously, and in order to do it the more successfully, she endeavoured to blind her, and put her off her guard, by an assumed aversion to the baronet. But she saw farther than Lucy gave her credit for, and Lucy should be disappointed. Leonard! Yes, there was Leonard certainly, —but it was no use thinking of him now. Leonard had teased her very much about the baronet, and had been captious and suspicious about nothing. Perhaps, if he had been more patient and reasonable, matters would not have been where they were now—she might have gone on flirting, and kept the baronet in good humour, and then he would not have taken up with Lucy. She had given Leonard many hints, too, about his sister, but he did not think proper to worry Lucy as he had worried her. One thing was certain, which was, that Leonard would make a very disagreeable hus-

band, and was not a man for a girl like her to be happy with—so it was useless thinking of him. Then, perhaps, the world never might find out what had happened—her residing at the lodge was in that respect very convenient; and if the baronet *did* continue constant to her, and *did* give up all thoughts of Lucy, she might be very happy—very happy indeed. Doubtless, he'd give her a great many beautiful things—silk dresses, and a lace veil, and a parasol, and smart bonnets, which would set off her beauty to advantage. "But then," whispered Truth, "if you wear all these fine things, you'll lose your character." "Oh, but," said Vanity, "when people see that the Squire is really fond of you, they'll not dare to say anything." "Besides," said Jealousy, "if you don't have them, Lucy will;" which last reflection finally settled that branch of the argument.

After wandering about for some hours in this state of mind, she went home, and there she found a visitor, a cousin of William Bell's, who was married to the quartermaster-serjeant of the regiment William was in. She had come home to spend a little time with her relations,

and had been paying a round of visits, and collecting a budget of village gossip. Amongst the rest she had heard that the squire was greatly taken up with Lucy Graham, and she wondered how William would like it, when he heard of it.

"Oh, but," said Jessie, "Lucy's so steady, you know; Lucy's one of those people that may do anything she likes."

"Lucy used to be steady, certainly," said Mrs. Lawson, the serjeant's wife; "but I am afraid, from what I hear, Lucy's a little taken by the squire. But I thought he used to be fond of you, Jessie? That was the last news I heard."

"Oh, me!—no!" said Jessie. "He doesn't care for me."

"Jessie wouldn't have anything to say to him," said Mrs. Matthieson, who was not remarkably quick-sighted.

"Was that it, Jessie?" said Mrs. Lawson. "Well, I'm sure that was very prudent of you, and I admire you for it. But it shews what the world is; the story was told me very differently, but I didn't believe it when I heard it. I said I was certain it wasn't true."

"What was it you heard?" asked Jessie.

"That the squire had got tired of you, and turned you off; and that you were breaking your heart after him, and ready to kill Lucy for jealousy."

"And who told you all that?" asked Jessie, colouring with anger.

"Everybody I spoke to."

"What a shame of people to tell such stories!" said Mrs. Matthieson.

"Wasn't it? And they said she was always lurking about and trying to throw herself in the squire's way; but that all she could do, he wouldn't take any notice of her, he was so taken up with Lucy Graham."

"Ha, ha!" said Jessie, forcing a laugh; "perhaps he's not so fond of Lucy Graham as they think."

"Ah! I don't know," said Mrs. Lawson. "Lucy's a beautiful girl. She's grown a great deal handsomer since I went away, and I remember hearing that old Lady Danby said Lucy Graham looked more like a lady than many a one that was born in a great house."

"Pooh!" said Jesse.

"What do you say '*pooh*' for, Jessie?" said Mrs. Matthieson. "I'm sure what Mrs. Lawson says is very true. There isn't such a pretty

girl sits in church of a Sunday as Lucy, nor such a well-behaved one. She's a pattern to all you giddy girls that are looking about, and giggling and laughing just under the parson's nose, and never minding where you are a bit!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed Jessie again, scornfully; "people are all very well till they're found out—it's very convenient to have such a fine character."

"Till they're found out!" said Mrs. Lawson, who was a foolish woman and a confirmed gossip. "Why, you don't mean to say, Jessie, that Lucy's doing anything wrong, do you?"

"Oh, I say nothing," replied Jessie. "Besides, how could such an angel as Lucy do anything wrong? Everything she does must be right, you know. Some people may steal a horse out of the stable, whilst another mustn't look over the hedge."

"But what do you mean, Jessie?" said Mrs. Lawson, drawing her chair closer. "Do tell me! You know you may trust me with anything. I shall never mention it again."

"She means nothing at all," said Mrs. Matthieson. "She's just chattering like the

magpie there, without knowing what she says."

"Don't I, mother? I fancy I could astonish you, and Mrs. Lawson too, if I were to tell you half I know."

"Well, then, do tell us," said Mrs. Lawson. "What's the use of making such a secret of what, I dare say, half the village knows."

"Oh, for the matter of that, there's no great pains taken to make a secret of it," said Jessie. "I'm sure when Sir John wants Lucy, he sends Mr. Groves openly enough to the farm, to fetch her."

"But she doesn't go!" said Mrs. Lawson.

"Doesn't she? But she does though!" said Jessie; "as fast as her legs can carry her."

"What? To the Castle?"

"Yes, to the Castle, or anywhere else he likes."

"No!" exclaimed Mrs. Lawson.

"I don't believe a word of it, Jessie," said Mrs. Matthieson. "Don't believe her, Mrs. Lawson; she's only laughing at you. Lucy would no more do such a thing than I would."

"It's as true as I stand here, mother!" said Jessie.

"Well!—my stars!" cried Mrs. Lawson; whilst Mrs. Matthieson laid down her work, took off her spectacles, and stared up in Jessie's face, with the greatest astonishment.

"Lucy Graham does that?" said she.

"To be sure she does!" answered Jessie, pertly. "Of course, nobody 'll believe it but them that see it, because Lucy Graham can't do anything wrong."

"Did you ever see her do it, Jessie?" asked Mrs. Matthieson.

"To be sure I did," replied Jessie; "she did it this very morning. She's at the Castle now, if she's not left."

"She never came this way," said Mrs. Matthieson.

"No; because he sent her word to go the back way, by the copse."

"And she did?" said Mrs. Lawson.

"Yes, and met him there," said Jessie.

"I'm sorry to hear it," said Mrs. Matthieson.

"Well! who'd have thought it!" exclaimed Mrs. Lawson, holding up her hands. "What *will* this world come to? I wonder how William will like it when it reaches his ears!"

"I wouldn't be first to tell him, if I was you," said Mrs. Matthieson.

"Who—I!" exclaimed Mrs. Lawson. "Not I, you may depend upon it; he'll never hear it from me."

"Ill news travels fast enough—besides, Jessie may be mistaken. Somehow or other, I can't believe it yet," said Mrs. Matthieson.

"Oh, no! you wouldn't believe it, if you saw it, of course," said Jessie.

"Perhaps he means to marry her, and make her my lady," suggested Mrs. Lawson.

"Marry *her!*" cried Jessie, with a face like fire, burning with rage and jealousy at the suggestion: "not he, indeed! He'd as soon think of marrying me."

"I don't know that," said Mrs. Matthieson. "He wont see such a girl as Lucy every day; and it's my opinion, if what Jessie says is true, about her going to meet him, that there must be more in it than we know."

"Many more out of the way things happen than that," said Mrs. Lawson. "Sir Thomas Disney married his mother's maid; and an officer in our regiment had an uncle that was a marquis, and yet he married a farmer's daughter. But I say, Jessie, when are you

and Leonard to come together? I asked him this morning how soon it was to be, and he hung his head, and said I must inquire of you."

"Never, perhaps!" said Jessie.

"Nonsense! You don't mean that, I'm sure. You'd better take Leonard, for then, when Lucy's my lady, you'll be my lady's sister-in-law." And having made these agreeable suggestions, the worthy woman took her departure, leaving the seeds to fructify; which they did; for she left Jessie much more irritable and jealous than she had found her, and consequently much more disposed to sacrifice herself on the altar of her own vanity. She felt sure that if she broke her appointment with the baronet, he would trouble himself no more about her. If she kept it—what then? She did not know. He had promised, in that case, to forsake Lucy. This was the only thing she saw clearly; beyond, all was vague and undefined; the future was a mystery, which she was too much engrossed with the present to attempt to penetrate.

Il n'y a si grand jour qui ne vienne à vèpres. And the day of Jessie's fate—the day on which depended the happiness of her future

life, and destinies that she little dreamed of, arrived at its termination like the rest. She had many struggles; but when the clock struck ten, the vanity and the jealousy were in the ascendant, so she put on her bonnet and shawl, and started for the summer-house.

CHAPTER VIII.

. . . . . .

"Regardless passed her o'er; nor graced with kind adieu;
That sting infix'd within her haughty mind,
The downfall of her empire she divined,
And her proud heart with secret sorrow pined.
. . . . . .
She ceased all hope; and now began
To make reflection on the unhappy man,
. . . who past expression loved;
Proof to disdain, and not to be removed."

THEODORE AND HONORIA.

IT may appear strange to those who look upon jealousy as an infallible symptom of love, that Jessie should have been driven to her own ruin by a rivalry with Lucy for the attentions of a man she did not care for—that is, for a man for whom she had no real affection, and whose assiduities, although they had flattered, had neither seduced nor charmed her. But vanity,

in some natures, amounts to a devouring passion—a passion whose power those who are not similarly afflicted, can hardly estimate, and whose consequences they cannot calculate. It is one of those apparently trifling causes, from which the most dire events too often spring; and vanity has its jealousy as well as love; and a cruel jealousy it is, for it not only drives its victims as fast to perdition as its more lofty original—and, indeed, much faster —but it is, besides, a mean, malignant, and spiteful passion; unrestrained by the same motives, without tenderness and without remorse, and belonging altogether to another character. A true and devoted love, whether well or ill placed, is in its nature generous, and is the offspring of a generous nature; whilst vanity, although, like all the dispositions implanted in us, it has its excellent uses, has yet ever a tendency to mean courses and by-ways. It dare not shew its face or avow itself; it has neither friend nor confidant, for it can hope for no sympathy in its pleasures, nor pity for its pains; and its pangs, which are bitter, too often boil over in malignity for want of a more natural vent.

The baronet kept his promise to Jessie for

about three weeks; that is, for that space of time his good-nature induced him to intermit his open pursuit of Lucy—an effort of virtue he found rather troublesome, and which, at the end of that period, he did not think it incumbent on him to exert any further, the good nature being no longer able to combat his passion and *ennui*. On the ensuing Sunday, poor Jessie observed his eyes constantly fixed on Lucy during service, whilst, for her part, she could scarcely get a look; and when they came out, she was obliged to walk past with her mother, leaving him actually lounging beside Lucy, under pretence of talking to Farmer Graham, on whose arm she was hanging. Jessie's eyes filled with tears, and her heart was ready to burst; for within the last three weeks, the character of her feelings had very much changed. Her vanity had not been wounded, nor her jealousy kept alive; and both, for want of excitement, had sunk into a state of repose, and left her character to recover its equilibrium. She had had time to reflect, too; for though she had not sought reflection, reflection had sought her, and her pride was humbled. She found herself awakening from a strange intoxication—an intoxica-

tion that she could not look back upon without surprise and disgust. If she had sacrificed herself for a man she really loved, there would have been something left—some memories to dwell on—some tendernesses to recall—some justifications in her secret heart—some consolations to her self-esteem; for the love that has once had a vigorous life, is immortal; it may die outwardly—its grosser and material parts may fade and perish, but its soul never dies; it outlives unkindness, injury, and neglect, absence and death; and survives for ever, unsuspected and unseen, embalmed there, where the world nor the world's pleasures cannot reach it; clothed in soft, sad memories, bitter-sweet, deep, deep in the heart to dwell, outliving all but life, and it may be even that—who knows? And never till our last, last sigh to be exhaled; then, perhaps, to fly with our immortal parts, and live with us again in other worlds.

But here there was nothing; as there had been no love, there were no tender memories, nor soft regrets. The past was like a dream, vague and unsatisfactory; as much without consolation, as the future was without hope. Even her jealousy was gone, as the conviction of the worthlessness of what she had striven

for was forced upon her mind; and if her heart swelled with anguish when she saw her perjured lover transferring his attentions again to Lucy, it was not from rivalry, but because such unfeeling conduct only exhibited in a clearer light the miserable bargain she had made. Besides, she believed now in that which in the heat of her passion she had declared altogether incredible—she believed in Lucy's virtue, and in the truths of her assertions, that the baronet's pursuit was odious to her. She comprehended that Lucy might have always been as clear-sighted as sad experience had made her; and she mourned over the infatuation which had made her listen with distrust to her friend's earnest representations and honest counsel. Even Leonard had his part in this retour; and she began to think of him with regret. He had been jealous—she had thought, over much—but now she saw what good cause he had; and the love and devotion which she had felt importunate, stood out now in beautiful relief against the baronet's cold selfishness and heartless profligacy.

Poor Jessie! she had indeed sold her birthright for a mess of pottage, and bitter was the

portion she got. With the rivalry, ceased the alienation from Lucy, to which it had given rise; and the lonely, forlorn, and depressed feeling that had taken possession of the unfortunate girl's mind, whilst it indisposed her for the society of her light-hearted village companions, made her cling to the kind and gentle friend, on whose truth she could rely, and whose character she was now learning to comprehend. But, on the other hand, she could not bear to see Leonard; she could no longer repel his affection with unkindness and contempt, nor answer his expostulations with taunts and impertinence. Poor Jessie was crest-fallen now—humble and grateful — and thankfully she would have accepted the attentions and listened to the protestations that before she had scorned. But she dare not accept—she must not listen; and thus, under the influence of these opposite impulses, her conduct became inexplicable. She was sad and silent, with sometimes forced flashes of assumed gaiety, over-acted and out of tune, as the gaiety of the unhappy always is; kind and unkind, repelling and affectionate, capricious and uncertain; whilst the effect of all this upon poor Leonard was grievous, for he became more in love than ever. Neither

he, nor any one else suspected the truth; for Jessie's first rupture with the baronet had been universally known, whilst the temporary reconciliation had remained a profound secret. Their intercourse, having been confined to a few nightly interviews at the Castle, under the management of the trusty and sagacious Mr. Groves, had escaped the vigilance of the village gossips. Thus, Leonard saw the inconsistencies, but he could not interpret them; and as there was no flirting to irritate him now, they only served to make her more interesting, exciting his curiosity and animating his affection. Sometimes, indeed, it occurred both to him and Lucy, that Jessie might be really in love with Sir John Eastlake; and that though her virtue had triumphed over her inclinations, it could not conquer her attachment, or extinguish her regret. This notion gave Leonard a great deal of pain, but it did not make him angry; as he was reasonable enough to admit, that, if that were the case, she could not help it; he only gave her credit for greater virtue, and loved her the more. He often urged Lucy to endeavour to find the key to Jessie's state of mind, which she promised

if possible to do, but Jessie was very impenetrable.

"Do you know, Jessie," said Lucy to her, one day, "Leonard's getting very unhappy."

"Is he? What about?" asked Jessie.

"About you. He says he don't know what to make of you."

"He never did," said Jessie, affecting to laugh.

"Oh, but you're very much altered, Jessie; we all see that."

"In what way?"

"In your spirits, and your looks, and in everything."

"Am I? Well, you know, people can't be always the same."

"No, certainly; but then at your age, people seldom alter so much without some cause; and we all think you must have something that's making you uneasy."

"Well, and suppose I had?" said Jessie.

"Why, then, if you would tell it us, we might be of some use to you. At all events, it might be a comfort."

Jessie shook her head.

"Do, Jessie! Indeed, it's not from curiosity

I want to know, but it's for poor Leonard's sake; and because, you know, I love you as if you were my sister."

"Do you?" said Jessie, sadly.

"To be sure I do. I've always looked upon you as my sister, ever since you've been engaged to my brother. Well, why don't you speak? Wont you tell me, Jessie?"

"But what if I've nothing to tell?" said Jessie.

"Oh, but I know you have," answered Lucy, stooping forward, and looking under her bonnet; "you're not crying in that way for nothing, Jessie." But Jessie only cried on. "Is it anything about the Squire, Jessie?"

"No, to be sure, it's not," replied Jessie, sharply. "What should it be about him?"

"Well, I thought perhaps you might be vexed at the way he goes on about me."

"Not I," said Jessie. "I know you've more sense than to care for him. You're not such a fool as I was."

"Well, but, dear, if you were foolish at first, I'm sure you made amends for it afterwards; so you needn't blame yourself about that, now. I'm sure we were saying, only yesterday, what a blessed thing it was you had seen through

him as you did; for mother and I went to call on poor Widow Lee, after church, and we found her with her Bible before her, crying ready to break her heart. It was just yesterday two years that poor Bessy died; and I don't believe he ever thought of it, for he was staring at me all service-time, and looking as happy as if he'd never done such a thing in his life."

"He has no feeling," said Jessie, in a low voice—"not a bit."

"Well, but, Jessie," continued Lucy, for the desponding tone in which the last words were spoken, revived the suspicion that Jessie's melancholy was, somehow or other, connected with the baronet—"you're not fond of him, are you?"

"Fond of him!" echoed Jessie, looking round at her companion, whilst her tears seemed suddenly dried at their source, and her eyes flashed fire. "Me fond of him! I hate him!"

In the meantime, Lucy, who had enjoyed her three weeks' immunity—a privilege she had referred to her firm rejection of his advances, the day he met her in the copse—found herself again subject to his persecutions; carried on, certainly, with some circumspection

and in a somewhat less insulting tone than his addresses to Jessie had assumed—a precaution which her own character and her father's commanded—but still persecutions they were to her. Neither were her father, mother, and brother ignorant of his proceedings; but, although they felt themselves aggrieved, they were not alarmed. They were too secure in their confidence in Lucy to entertain a moment's doubt of her prudence, not to mention the additional protection of her love for William—a love, however, which her parents were far from delighting in, as they abhorred the idea of her marrying a soldier, and thought she might do much better. But as no arguments they could use seemed likely to detach her from the object of her affections, they contented themselves with forbidding their union, till something should occur to change William's prospects; hoping, in the meanwhile, that time and absence might accomplish, on one side or the other, what persuasion or opposition could not effect.

In spite of all the baronet's efforts, it was not often he could obtain an opportunity of prosecuting his suit, so carefully Lucy avoided him. She could not well decline the employ-

ment that Lady Eastlake had long been in the habit of giving her, because the money she thus earned was too much needed. The seasons had been bad, and times were hard; and Farmer Graham had much ado to pay his rent, and make a decent living for his family. It is true, Sir John told him he need not be at all uneasy about his rent, but might pay it at his convenience; but under existing circumstances, this was a favour none of the family were willing to accept. Lucy, therefore, who, besides plain work, was handy at dress-making, and could, with great accuracy, copy anything she saw, still kept to her employment. But she rarely went to the Castle, without some of her family or a friend accompanying her; and her father or brother always took care to be in readiness, in the evening, to conduct her home. When there at work, she could not keep the son out of the mother's apartments; but as she was seldom alone, that did not so much signify.

This state of affairs had continued some time —Lucy, wary and vigilant; Leonard, puzzled and unhappy; Jessie, sad and mysterious; and the baronet *aux abois*, for there did not happen to be another pretty girl in the village, with whom he could console himself, when, one morn-

ing, Mrs. Matthieson arrived at the farm, in a state of the greatest anxiety, to inquire if they knew anything of Jessie. She had bade her mother good night on the preceding evening, as usual, but her bed had not been slept in, and she was not to be found. Leonard looked as if he had received his death-warrant on hearing this intelligence, and Lucy turned pale with affright, for they both anticipated that something dreadful had happened, and that they were on the eve of the *dénouement* of her mysterious melancholy. Mrs. Matthieson said she had observed that Jessie had not been looking well, or in good spirits, for several weeks, and now she was afraid there was more in it than she had suspected, and that the girl had something on her mind. Leonard and Lucy said they were sure of it, but none of them could furnish a key to the mystery; nevertheless, it seemed an odd coincidence that the baronet had left Eastlake at a very early hour that morning, and was not expected home for two or three months. But Mrs. Matthieson could not, by any means, connect the two events; for she said the squire had given up looking after Jessie a long time ago, because she would have nothing to say to him; and for

her part, she didn't believe they had so much as spoken for weeks past. The only person that had an inkling of the truth was Geordie. He had always had a great dislike to Jessie's levity, and the indifferent opinion he had of her, helped him to a suspicion of what had happened. However, lest he should be judging her uncharitably, he kept his thoughts to himself—at least, he communicated them only to his wife. The inquiries made through the village and at the Castle elicited nothing; the baronet was absent, and Mr. Groves was with him. However, Lady Eastlake, when she was informed of what had occurred, expressed great commiseration, and sent Mrs. Matthieson a present of five pounds. Leonard spent days and weeks in wandering over the country, endeavouring to discover some traces of his lost love, but in vain; the mystery was impenetrable.

CHAPTER IX.

"*Autolycus.* Here's one to a very doleful tune—How a usurer's wife was brought to bed of twenty money-bags at a burden; and how she longed to eat adders' heads, and toads carbonadoed.

"*Mopsa.* Is it true, think you?

"*Aut.* Very true, and but a month old."

WINTER'S TALE.

"I'd rather meet
A witch far north than a fine fool in love."

MORE DISSEMBLERS BESIDES WOMEN.

ABOUT three months after Jessie's disappearance, there happened to arrive at the village of Eastlake, a sort of pedler, or itinerant merchant. He dealt principally in printed cottons, and was in the habit of travelling over a great part of England every year with his wares. He was a great carrier of gossip, and besides being considered a very valuable guest

at the village inns, where, like a favourite actor, he drew great houses, he often procured himself a seat at the fireside of his customers by his tongue, which regularly arrived well charged with news and tittle-tattle, from all parts of the island; not the less amusing that it was generally very incorrect, for Gregory was a very unfaithful reporter; partly, from his brain being charged with more intelligence than it could carry or arrange in an orderly fashion, which caused him to make a sort of olla-podrida of what he collected at different places, mixing it all together, till nobody could have known their own,—and neither he nor any one else could disentangle the main thread of the story he was narrating, from the numerous auxiliary ones which he had grafted on it,—and, partly, because Gregory thought if his clients were pleased, it did not much matter whether his information was strictly correct or not, and that if they were willing to give him a seat in their chimney corner, and a supper, for the sake of the entertainment he could afford them, there could be no harm, on his part, in heightening their amusement by a little fiction. Gregory was, therefore, a capital

hand at a murder, which, however horrid it might have been in the original, he always took care to improve with some additional particulars, heaping Pelion upon Ossa, and adding horror to horror. A housebreaking, too, he always amplified and adorned in a manner peculiar to himself; decorating the robbers with black masks, tying the inmates to the bed-posts till the marauders had supped comfortably, and were at leisure to kill them; committing all sorts of enormities upon the women, young and old—for he made a point of shewing no partiality in that respect—and putting the children in the oven; so that each particular village, in its turn, found occasion to bless itself that it was not so wicked as the rest of the world, and that although, certainly, unpleasant things would sometimes happen, still they were not of that frightful and harrowing description that occurred elsewhere.

When Gregory had visited Eastlake the preceding year, it had been at the period of Jessie's reign with the baronet, on which occasion he had made a very successful market with her vanity, which was eager to secure the most becoming dresses he had. Now, the first thing he was asked was, if he knew what

was become of Jessie—if he had met her, or heard of her in his travels?

"Jessie Matthieson, that lived up at the park gate?—what! is she away?" said he.

"She's been gone these three months, and nobody knows what's come of her," said the hostess of the Black Bull.

"You don't say so?" said he. "And what made her go?"

"That's just what nobody knows. She'd been dull like, and looking sickly for some time, but we never thought there was anything in it particular, till all at once she wasn't to be found."

"But when I was here last, she was *in* with the squire. Doesn't he know what's come of her?"

"But that was all over long ago, and he's took up with Lucy Graham since that."

"Lucy Graham! What, Farmer Graham's daughter, up at the farm? Well! I shouldn't ha' thought she'd ha' had anything to say to the like o' him."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Lawson, who happened to be drinking tea with the hostess—"the squire's the squire, you know; girls are soon caught!"

"Is the squire here?" inquired Gregory, after a few moments' silence.

"No," replied Mrs. Green, the hostess; "he went away the very morning Jessie was missing."

"That's sing'lar, too," said Gregory.

"Yes; but her mother says she's certain it was all over between him and Jessie; and the people at the turnpike say they're certain nobody was in the carriage but the squire and Mr. Groves," replied Mrs. Green.

"She ha'n't drowned herself, has she?" said Gregory.

"Not in none of the water hereabout, she hasn't," returned Mrs. Green. "If she's done that, she's gone further afield for it."

This piece of information, with respect to Jessie, seemed to make some impression on the pedler; rather more, indeed, than might have been expected, considering the number of extraordinary things he was in the habit of hearing and relating; for he became unusually silent, and fell into a sort of cogitation. The fact was, that in spite of his love of narrating, which he considered pretty nearly as much his vocation as selling of cotton prints, he gene rally so far regulated his communications as to

avoid injuring himself; he abstained from reporting matters that might be likely to make him enemies or bring him into trouble; and he was considering how far he might, with safety, pursue the present subject.

"Do you know where the squire is?" he asked.

"When he went from here, we heard it was to Lunnun he was going."

"May be, it was; but when I was in Leicestershire t'other day, I heard say he was staying at Hillside."

"That's likely enough," said Mrs. Green; "he'd be down there shooting."

"Yes," returned Gregory; "he has a power of game in his preserves there. He shot fifty hares and bagged ninety brace of birds the morning before I got there."

"My stars!" exclaimed Mrs. Lawson. "What, himself? Without anybody to help him?"

"All with his own gun," replied Gregory. "He had nobody with him; he's living there quite alone—that is—hem! He has no company."

"Were you up at the house?" inquired Mrs. Green.

"No, I wasn't; but I saw Gale, the gamekeeper, at the Chequers."

"I suppose we shall have the squire back again soon," observed Mrs. Green. "He's never over fond of staying there."

"I couldn't say," answered Gregory, absently. "Jessie Matthieson—she that's missing—was a black-haired girl, wasn't she?"

"Yes, she was," replied Mrs. Lawson. "She'd black hair and black eyes."

"Why?" inquired Mrs. Green. "You didn't hear any thing of her, did you?"

"Why, I can't rightly say whether I did or not," replied Gregory. "It seems a sort of a coincidence, as one may say, but still it mightn't be she more than another."

"Where?—what?" simultaneously exclaimed both the ladies.

"Why, I was a-saying to Gale that I wondered what the squire could be doing all alone by himself at Hillside, such a dull place as it is, except for the shooting. 'Oh,' says Gale, says he, with a wink, 'he's got a pretty bird in a cage there, to amuse him.'"

"What did he mean by that?" said the women.

"That was what I axed him," said Gregory, "and he said the squire had got a young 'oman there living with him; he brought her with him when he come down from Lunnun; just him, and Mr. Groves, and the girl in the carriage."

"Lauk! What a man he is!" exclaimed Mrs. Green.

"Well," said Mrs. Lawson; "but what makes you think it was Jessie Matthieson?"

"It might, or it might not," replied Gregory; "only, as I said afore, there's a coin*cidence* in it."

"So there is, to be sure," said Mrs. Green.

"I'd lay my life it's her, after all!" said Mrs. Lawson. "I always thought Jessie was deeper than folks took her for."

"And didn't the gamekeeper know where he brought her from?" inquired the hostess.

"Nobody knew," answered Gregory, "except it was Mr. Groves. I suppose he might know, but, in course, he was mum. Howsomever, Gale said she'd black hair and black eyes, and was altogether as pretty a cretur as he'd wish to clap his eyes on."

"Depend on it, it's Jessie," said Mrs.

Lawson. "She just went away the night afore, and waited for him on the road, and he took her up after they'd passed the turnpike."

"Well, it may be," said Mrs. Green. "You didn't hear what her name was?"

"It was a thing I never thought of asking," replied Gregory, "never supposing that it was anybody I knew. To say the truth I thought it was some miss he'd picked up in Lunnun, only Gale said that he heard from one of the housemaids that she was always a crying, poor thing! when the squire was out, and that didn't look as if she was one of them sort, you know."

It may be imagined that this bit of news, with the hypothesis attached to it, by the aid of Mrs. Lawson, was not long in finding its way to the farm, where it met with different degrees of credit. Geordie believed it altogether, because he found it entirely consistent with his notion of Jessie's character; Leonard inclined to believe it, because he feared it; Mrs. Graham thought it very likely to be true, although she told Leonard she was sure it was not; Lucy gave no credit to it whatever. She felt quite certain that Jessie's declaration of hatred had been sincere, and she could conceive no motive for a girl taking such a step

with a man she detested. Mrs. Matthieson was equally incredulous. She said, if she thought it was her daughter, she'd set off directly to Leicestershire, and fetch her back; but she was satisfied it was not. She knew that Jessie had no liking for the squire; nor the squire for her, of late. Leonard had a great mind to set off for Leicestershire, too. He said it would be a great relief to his mind to know the truth. If it proved to be Jessie that was living with the squire, he was sure he should then be entirely cured of his love, and would be able to turn his mind to other things; but as it was he could think on no other subject, and was perfectly useless. But his father and mother set themselves strongly against all idea of such an expedition; they felt very uncertain as to how he might conduct himself, if he found Jessie and the baronet at Hillside; and altogether had not confidence enough in their son's prudence to allow him to undertake it. Time, they said, must, ere long, disclose whether it were she or not, as Sir John's return was shortly expected, and her mother would then ascertain the truth; meanwhile, he must wait with patience; if he would only mind his business, his father said, he would

not be so unhappy. However, Leonard's patience, not being of a very enduring texture, would not long have stood the trial, had not tidings reached Eastlake that the baronet and Mr. Grove had left Hillside, and were on their way home, stopping at the places of different gentlemen on the road, for a few days' shooting, as they came along, so that his suspense was likely to be soon relieved. Shortly afterwards, this intelligence was confirmed by the arrival of the carriage and footmen; they had been sent home from Sir James Dalton's, where the baronet and Mr. Grove were to stay a week or ten days, and then return on horseback; for which purpose a groom was to take the horses over to Calderwood the next day.

A week or ten days implies a very uncertain duration of time. Everybody must have experienced how cruelly short, and how dreadfully long a period it is—how it flies and how it lags—it's the most capricious, inaccurate, contradictory measurement of time imaginable. Leonard found it interminable, and he repented he had not gone off the very first day he heard Sir John was at Calderwood; it was but fifteen miles, and he could have walked there at night, and returned early in the morning, without his

parents even missing him—at least, without his father missing him, and his mother he did not mind. However, the week was nearly at an end now, so he would try and wait; but when he heard from Mrs. Matthieson that Lady Eastlake had received a letter from her son, saying he was going to prolong his absence a few days longer, Leonard's fortitude gave way—his powers of endurance were exhausted, and he confided to his mother his determination to set off and walk to Calderwood that evening; and if he could succeed in procuring an interview with Mr. Groves, he would return early the next day; if, on the contrary, he should be longer detained, she could tell his father where he was. He said it was no use waiting; he might as well be at Calderwood as at home, for he could neither work by day, nor sleep by night; and his mother, who saw that this was true, and that he had quite lost his appetite, and was feverish and ill, consented to his going. He was her darling; and seldom, indeed, did she refuse him anything, or oppose him in any of his wishes. She had been his *confidante* and his comforter all through his stormy and uneasy courtship, and had always defended and supported Jessie, whenever it was possible; she

had done it to spare him immediate pain; but now she feared she had been wrong; an earlier and firmer resistance might have saved him much after-suffering, and she regretted that she had not better supported her husband's opposition to the connexion. Now, she thought it was too late—the poor boy was so wretched that he must be relieved from his suspense. However, the ill effects of her misjudging indulgence with respect to her son, confirmed the resolution she had formed to follow a different course with her daughter. There Geordie was inclined to be too indulgent; but she disliked that match as much as he could the other; and she was determined to take warning by experience, and oppose it in time. Leonard started in the evening as arranged; and as he was not returned when his father inquired for him, on the following morning, his mother was obliged to confess where he was gone. Geordie highly disapproved of the proceeding, and blamed his wife very much, for allowing the young man to go away unknown to him; but as he *was* gone, there was nothing to be done but to await his return with what patience they might. Leonard, however, neither returned that day nor the next; and his mother,

now repenting of her acquiescence in his scheme, and becoming greatly alarmed, urged her husband to go to Calderwood in search of him. Geordie said he could ill spare the time, but that if they heard nothing of him on the following day, he believed he would.

CHAPTER X.

"Du bebst vor Allem was nicht trifft,
Und was du nie verlierst das musst du stets beweinen."
FAUST.

"Whosoever loves he down doth bring
From that he was, into some meaner thing;
Shews him ridiculous to standers by,
And quite bereaves him of perceiving why."
SIR BENJAMIN RUDYARD.

IN the meantime, we must turn our attention in another direction, and request our readers to recall a certain conversation that passed at the lodge of Eastlake park, on the subject of the baronet's attentions to Lucy, and Lucy's reception of them; on which occasion, Mrs. Lawson, without making needless difficulties, accepted Jessie's version of the story; and this, with such additions as the circumstances of the case conveniently admitted of, she con-

veyed to her husband in her first letter, with a strong recommendation that he should lose no time in telling "that poor young man, William, all about it, as it was high time he was prepared for what he had to expect." Serjeant Lawson, however, did not see what he had to do with the business; and as William Bell was a young man of ardent feelings, and rather quick temper, who was not likely to take such a piece of information very quietly, he thought it as well to let it reach him from some other channel; for, as he argued, "ill news travelled fast enough, and arrived sooner than it was wanted." He therefore contented himself with throwing out a few hints and inuendoes occasionally, about the levity, inconstancy, and worthlessness of women, and the folly of men in caring for them, allowing themselves to be made unhappy by such gallimaufries—the honest serjeant's favourite term of abuse,—and that, for his part, he thought those were best off that had least to do with them; all which invectives greatly amused William, who took them for so many flings at Mrs. Lawson, on whom he did not think them very ill-bestowed. However, although the serjeant did not tell William what he had heard, he did not main-

tain the same reserve with everybody. There was a young woman belonging to the regiment, a daughter of one of the soldiers, who was said to be in love with William, and who, certainly, had taken no little pains to let him know it; but he was deaf and blind to all her advances, and she soon learnt that William was an engaged man, and that there was no chance for her in that quarter. But when Lawson heard the tidings of Lucy's delinquencies, he said to the girl, in jest, "Now, Peggy Bland, look sharp, and you may have a chance. The enemy's retreated, and if you're clever, and manage your ammunition well, I wouldn't say but you may take the fort and march in with colours flying, after all." Peggy was too much interested in this intelligence, not to seek for further explanation; and when she had got at some inkling of the truth, she eagerly seized the earliest opportunity of getting it conveyed to William. At first, he did not believe it. He thought it was a scheme of Peggy's to serve her own purpose; but, at last, being urged to apply to Lawson for further information, he did so, and discovered there was more foundation for the girl's story than he had imagined. Still, however, his confidence in Lucy

was so great, that he did not know how to credit the report, and his distrust in it was the greater, on account of the quarter whence it originated; for he had but an indifferent opinion of Mrs. Lawson's good nature and veracity. So he wrote to Lucy, hinting what he had heard, and requesting an explanation by return of post; but no explanation came. He wrote again, and again, but still with no better success; then he began to be alarmed and suspicious, and he applied for a furlough, which was, however, refused him. The regiment was the next for foreign service, and several men that had gone on furlough lately, not liking the prospect that was before them, had taken the opportunity of deserting. Strict orders had consequently been issued from the Horse Guards, that no furloughs were to be granted in those regiments that were about to be sent abroad, and the severest penalty was denounced against deserters.

The failure of his application was a dreadful blow to William, who had hoped that his good character, and popularity with his officers would have prevailed; but the colonel was inexorable. Then, he wrote again to Lucy, entreating her to relieve his uneasiness, but still

no answer came. Then, his alarm became excessive; his mind was distracted, he could no longer attend to his duty; and he told Lawson that if this state of anguish continued, he was sure he should lose his senses. Lawson told him he was a fool to mind the woman-kind—that they were all alike, and one was as good and as bad as another; if Lucy was gone, why, he advised him to take up with Peggy. Peggy was a handsome, buxom lass, that had been born in the regiment, and was more fit to follow a knapsack than Lucy was. Lucy had been brought up too soft; for his part, he thought the young man was well rid of her; and that, in fine, she must be a pretty jade, for that not only had she bilked her own lover, but she had carried off another girl's, and the poor thing had been and drowned herself for love."

"What girl do you mean?" inquired William.

"A girl by the name of Jessie," replied Lawson.

"But who was the lover?" said William. "Is it your wife you heard this from?"

"To be sure it is," answered Lawson; "she desired me to tell you; but why should I make

an honest man uncomfortable about such a weathercock?"

"But when did you hear it?"

"Oh, several weeks ago. I believe the lover was the squire; but if you'll come with me and take a glass of grog, I'll look for the letter; perhaps I've got it yet."

William eagerly accepted the invitation; but the letter was not to be found; the honest serjeant recollected that he had lighted his pipe with it; however, he made amends for the deficiency, by filling up the particulars that his memory did not supply, from his imagination; and as he was of opinion that the affair had now arrived at that stage, that the worse Lucy's conduct appeared, the better chance there was of William's recovery, he did not scruple to paint everything *en noir*. What effect his remedy was to have did not, however, immediately appear evident. William, after asking the requisite number of questions, and obtaining all the information the serjeant could furnish, made no remarks, but fell into a profound reverie, and remained for a considerable time perfectly silent—a silence which Lawson at length broke by recommending him to drink his grog, and let him make him

another glass; a piece of advice which William followed. But when the serjeant proposed a third tumbler, on the pretext that it would drown care and make him forget his troubles, he declined, observing that he was on duty that night, and must keep himself steady. The serjeant, therefore, drank the grog for him, whilst William still sat in silent thought. At length, however, he arose, and looking at his watch, observed that he must be off, as the guard would be turning out.

"Good night, old fellow!" he said to Lawson, shaking him heartily by the hand; "we've had many a weary march, and many a merry day together, haven't we?"

"Ay, that have we, lad," said Lawson, "and shall have many more yet."

"Do you think so?" said William, absently.

"Do I think so?" reiterated Lawson. "To be sure I think so. What should hinder us? Aren't we going to have a knock at the Mounseers. That's the sport, my boy! Old Boney 'll knock the love out of you. There's little time to be thinking of such gallimaufries when the balls are flying about one's ears. Hoot, toot, man! That's better worth a soldier's while than sighing after a petticoat."

"I wish I was amongst them now!" said William, with a sigh.

"I wish you was," said Lawson. "You'd have to keep your breath to warm your fingers, instead of puffing it away in sighs."

"I wish I'd enlisted with a regiment that was going on service at once," said William, "instead of one just come home."

"It's a great deal better as it is," said Lawson. "Now you'll go out a corporal, at least, for you're to be made to-morrow; and then the way to promotion is open before you. I always said I should see you with a pair of epaulettes on your shoulders; and so I shall."

"Well, good-bye, Lawson," said William, shaking him again by the hand.

"Good night," said Lawson, carelessly. "I'm going to turn in."

When William came out of Lawson's room, he stood for some minutes at the door, looking up at the heavens. The sky was clear and star-bespangled above, whilst beneath floated broken and fleecy clouds, and, being autumn, the evening was chilly. As he stood, his little dog, Tyke, came jumping to his feet.

"Ah, Tyke," he said, "poor Tyke, poor Tyke, poor fellow!" and stooping down, he patted the

dog, murmuring, "Ah, Tyke! Tyke! good honest nature! You are not ungrateful, poor doggy! You give love for love. You wouldn't break your poor master's heart—would you, Tyke?" and then, half-choking with the recollections that rushed upon him, he dashed the tears from his eyes, and, having first visited his own room, for a few minutes, he proceeded to the barrack square, where the officers and soldiers who were for guard were assembled, and, having received his orders and his countersign, he marched to his post.

"It's a cold night to be on guard, William, isn't it?" said a female voice; and, looking round, he saw Peggy.

"Ah, Peggy," said he, in a softer tone than usual—"is it you?"

"Yes," said Peggy, "I came to bring you a nice comforter that I've knitted for you, to wear on cold nights."

"Thank you, Peggy; that's very kind of you," said William.

There was something in the tone of his voice so gentle, so unlike the usual cold—perhaps, almost contemptuous—indifference with which he usually answered her, that poor Peggy's heart was in her throat. The truth was, that

William was beginning to understand what those whose hearts have never suffered are somewhat slow to learn—namely, the value of love, and the agonies of love, and the respect and consideration that true love merits, let it proceed from whatever quarter it may; and he was suddenly becoming sensible of the extreme cruelty of adding needless anguish to inevitable pain, by the scorn and unkindness which tortures but does not cure; or, if it do, cures by the most agonizing of all processes—rankling, instead of soothing the wounded heart, plunging the knife to the very core to pluck out the poor love hidden there, and leaving an angry scar, that years of after-life cannot efface.

The girl stood silent for a minute, for she felt that she could not address him with the flippant tone that she had been accustomed to assume, in order to conceal the pangs his cold scorn inflicted. His feelings were evidently tuned in another key, and, with the sympathy of true love, hers responded to the note.

"It's a cold night for you to be out, Peggy," he said, "you had better go home, my girl."

"I don't mind the cold," said Peggy; "it never hurts me."

"You've a warm heart, I fancy, Peggy, and that keeps out the cold."

"Perhaps it does," answered Peggy.

"So much the worse for you, my girl," replied he; "it'll cost you many a heart-ache."

"I dare say it will," said Peggy, "but, you know, one can't help one's heart, William."

"No," said William, with a sigh.

"Even you men can't, and how should we poor women?"

"How, indeed?" said William.

"Men are very hard upon us," said Peggy, "for doing just what they do themselves."

"What's that?" asked William.

"Why, I mean that if we love them when they don't ask us, they despise us, and think there's nothing too bad for us, and everybody's against us—yet men fall in love with anybody they like, whether one wants them or not, and nobody blames them."

"That's very true, Peggy, and perhaps it's not quite fair; but women should wait to be courted."

"Ah! it's very easy talking," said Peggy.

"At any rate, Peggy," said William, "if a

girl should take a fancy to a man, she should never let him see it."

"I dare say that's true enough, William; but one can't always help it, you know."

"But you must try and help it, Peggy. I'm afraid we men are not worthy that you should place such a confidence in us. We don't know how to behave under it. Half of the men in the world would take advantage of it to do you an injury; the other half will treat you with hard-hearted indifference—both will despise you, and think ill of you."

"No, William," said Peggy, who, with the forgiveness of a loving heart, was already forgetting his past scorn in his present kindness, "they wouldn't *all* do so."

"If not quite all, I fear there are but few exceptions," replied William; "and, indeed, Peggy," he said, taking her hand, "I can't pretend to be one of them. The truth is, Peggy, I am afraid we have very little sympathy with women's feelings where our own are not interested. We are very selfish, and we pursue our own objects, and pleasures, and indulgences, without weighing the pain we inflict, or taking the trouble to understand it.

Perhaps, I am beginning to understand it better now,—still, that makes no difference, Peggy; and the advice I am giving you as a friend, is the same—never let any man know you love him till he has asked you."

"But suppose he never asks me?" said Peggy.

"Then you must keep it to yourself, Peggy. Depend on it, you have a much better chance of his liking you if he don't know it than if he does."

"Well, that seems very odd," said Peggy.

"It is very odd," said William, "but I'm afraid it's true. I remember once reading in a book, that man was by nature a hunting animal, and I suppose we like the pleasure of the chase; besides, you know nobody prizes what they get too easily."

"Well, that seems very odd, too," said Peggy, "because I should think if one is fond of a man because one can't help it, it must be much truer love than if we only do it because he courts us, when, perhaps, we should never have thought of him if he had left us alone."

"Perhaps it is truer love," said William; "for very often I dare say it's rather the

courtship that women love than the man. Still, Peggy, as you cannot make men different from what they are, you must take my advice, and never shew your love till it's asked for—and then, perhaps, if you hide it very cleverly, and look very pretty—and you *are* very pretty, Peggy, and are very merry—you may sometimes win the heart you wish for—that is, if it's free. They say some women are clever enough to make any man they like fond of them."

"But the worst of it is, people are not clever when they are in love, nor merry either," said Peggy.

"No, Peggy," said William, sadly, "indeed we're not. We're very foolish."

"People that have all their wits about them, and can stop to think what's best to be done, can't be much in love, I'm sure," said Peggy.

"Well, Peggy, you must try and take my advice, or else, perhaps, some misfortune may happen to you—and now, my girl, you'd better go home."

"No misfortune will happen to me," said Peggy.

"There's no telling, Peggy. You've a loving heart, and you must take care of yourself."

"But I shall never love anybody again, William," said she, bursting into a passion of tears.

"Oh, yes, you will, by and by," said William. "You couldn't live without loving somebody."

"I shall always love somebody," answered Peggy, sobbing; "but it will always be the same person."

"No, no!" said William, patting her kindly on the back. "You'll forget that, by and by, Peggy, when I'm gone."

"Gone!" echoed Peggy.

"I mean, when you don't see so much of me," said William.

"No, I shall never forget it; and shall never like anybody else," rejoined Peggy.

"But, you know, I can't return it—I have always told you so, Peggy."

"I know that," said Peggy; "but that makes no difference; I love you better now than ever I did before, because you have spoken so kindly to me."

"Then I've been wrong to speak so," said

William, dropping her hand, which he had hitherto held. "I'm only doing you harm."

"Oh, no—no, William!" said she, seizing his hand again, and eagerly kissing it; "you're not doing me harm, but a great, great deal of good. I shall be much happier now than I was before, for now I know you pity me, and that you don't hate me. It seemed so cruel to hate me because I liked you, that it made me miserable. You can't help not loving me—I know that, and I don't blame you a bit; but when you used to speak so cold and scornful-like to me, I couldn't see any use in it; and it seemed so unfeeling, that sometimes I thought you couldn't have a good heart to do it. Now I shall be quite happy—that is, if——"

"If what?"

"If Lucy Graham don't come. I couldn't bear that."

"There's no chance of that, Peggy," said William, with a heavy sigh.

"Is it about her you're unhappy, William?"

"Perhaps it is, Peggy."

"What! is it true she doesn't love you?"

"She used to love me, Peggy; but come,

you most go home, my girl. Good night, and God bless you!"

"Good night, William," said she, kissing his hand; "you'll wear my comforter."

"I will, for your sake, Peggy."

"It was a happy day for me I knit it," said Peggy; "it has brought me all these kind words."

"There comes a time when our own troubles make us understand other people's," said William.

"God bless you, William."

"God bless you, Peggy!" and, touched by her grateful and patient love, he threw his arm round her waist—for a moment pressed her to his heart, and imprinted a kiss on her lips. Never was kiss better bestowed! How many wounds it healed!—how many cold greetings and frigid partings it blotted out!—how many galling recollections and mortifications it effaced!—how many averted looks!—how many smiles and attentions lavished where they were not valued, to be withheld where they were so eagerly desired!—how much bitterness, in short, was sweetened by that one little kiss!

Peggy tripped home with a light step and a glad heart—her pillow was smooth that night, and she slept the sleep of the blest, with his kiss upon her lips—yet that night, William Bell forsook his post, and deserted from his guard.

CHAPTER XI.

"Yet reason tells us parents are o'erseen,
When, with too strict a rein, they do hold in
Their child's affections, and control that love,
Which the high powers divine inspire them with;
When, in their shallowest judgments, they may know
Affection cross'd brings misery and woe."

HOG HATH LOST HIS PEARL.

"*He.* It standeth so; a deed is do',
Whereof great harm shall grow;
My destiny is for to die
A shameful death, I trow."

"*She.* Oh, Lord, what is this world's bliss,
That changeth as the moon,
My summer's day in lusty May,
Is darken'd before the noon."

THE NUT-BROWN MAID.

WILLIAM deserted from his guard; thereby committing one of the highest military offences, and placing his life in jeopardy; for it was during the period of our "just and necessary

wars," when martial law was generally strictly enforced, that the events we are narrating occurred. He deserted from his guard, because, in spite of his repeated entreaties that she would write and relieve his uneasiness, he received no letters from Lucy, and was kept in suspense with respect to the truth or falsehood of the reports that had reached him of her inconstancy; which suspense, to a man of a somewhat hasty and impatient temperament, and very much in love, was unendurable and like to drive him out of his senses; and under the excitement of jealousy and the anguish of uncertainty, he thought no sacrifice too great that could purchase relief and put an end to his pain —death itself seeming far preferable to its longer duration. But the young soldier was not alone in his distress. Strange to say, Lucy Graham was suffering from precisely a parallel cause—suffering intensely—only, from having a better regulated mind and a calmer temperament, she endured her pangs with more patience, and was better able to conceal them. Lucy received no letters from William, though she had written him many, earnestly entreating for immediate answers. What could be the cause of his silence she could not conceive! True, Mrs.

Lawson occasionally threw out inuendoes about a pretty girl in the regiment called Peggy Bland, that was very fond of William, and that Lucy had better look sharp, for that some thought William was not so hard-hearted to Peggy as he pretended; adding, significantly, that she supposed, however, Lucy did not care much *now* about red-coats, and so forth. But Lucy had great confidence in William's affection; the very last letter she had received from him had been overflowing with love and hope, and she could not believe in an infidelity so sudden and unaccountable. She knew he was neither ill nor absent from his regiment; that much she gathered from Mrs. Lawson, who was in regular correspondence with her husband; but having little confidence in that worthy lady's prudence or good-nature, she took care never to betray her uneasiness or breathe a hint of William's mysterious silence. She was equally reserved with her parents, for knowing that they disapproved of her engagement, and would not be sorry to find a pretext for breaking it off, she was careful not to give them any cause to suspect William's attachment or fidelity. She might forgive what they would be glad to think unpardonable.

The post-office was kept by a sister of Mrs. Graham's, a widow, whose name was Dunn, and thither Lucy went, as frequently as she dare without exciting too much observation, to inquire for her expected letter—but no letter was there. The disheartening negative, which day after day has conducted so many unhappy applicants through all the gradations betwixt disappointment and despair, was all she got for her pains. Many a time she could hardly forbear seizing the letters out of her aunt's hand and examining them herself, so strange and impossible it appeared to her that there should be none from William. At length, this state of things endured so long that she began to dislike going. She fancied her aunt looked suspiciously at her, and her cousin inquisitively; she even imagined that the neighbours must observe that she always came away empty-handed; she feared that her countenance must betray her anxiety and disappointment, and in Eastlake, as in other small places, everybody's affairs concerned everybody; and as her hopes became daily less, her visits became more rare. She begged her aunt if any letters came for her to send them, and sometimes she requested Leonard to call, but she seldom went herself.

However, when Leonard had been away two days, and his mother urged Geordie to go to Calderwood in search of him, the old man suggested, that perhaps the lad would write, and say what had detained him. "Go, Lucy," said he, "and see if the letters are come, and ask if there's one from your brother;" and Lucy went.

Lucy was extremely unhappy about her brother; she knew how little he was fitted to endure affliction, and she was sadly afraid of his getting into collision with the baronet, if his companion at Hillside proved to be Jessie. Even as it was, Leonard's resentment against the squire was at times very violent, and it had frequently been very warmly expressed. He not only considered himself deeply injured with respect to Jessie, but he was also very angry at Sir John's conduct towards his sister. He had said more than once that he deserved to be shot, and that anybody that put him out of the way would do the world a service. "If he behaved to ladies as he does to his tenants' sisters and daughters," said he, "he'd have had his brains blown out long ago."

Ever since she learnt where he was gone,

Lucy's mind was so occupied by anxiety about her brother, that she had no time to think of her own troubles ; and when she asked if there was a letter, she thought only of one from Leonard.

" Mother's got a bad cold, and the doctor says she's to stay in bed all day," said Sally Dunn, who was just in the act of opening the bag, " so I'm to do the letters. Is Leonard come back?"

" No," replied Lucy. " Father sent me to see if there was a letter from him; we're quite unhappy about him. Is there?"

" I'll see in a minute," said Sally, turning out the contents of the bag.

" Any letter for me, Sally?" said Mrs. Lawson, who just then walked in.

" I'll see presently," said Sally. " I'm looking for one for Lucy."

" We're expecting a letter from my brother," said Lucy," not wishing Mrs. Lawson to suppose she was come in search of one from another quarter.

" Here's one for you, Lucy," said Sally, handing it over the counter to her.

As Lucy took it, Mrs. Lawson looked over

her shoulder. "Oh, oh, Miss Lucy," said she, "I wish you joy! Long looked for, come at last, eh?"

"Is there no other letter?" asked Lucy, depositing her treasure in her bosom, and endeavouring to speak as calmly as she could; but her voice shook, and her face turned from red to pale, clearly betraying her agitation to the observing eye of Mrs. Lawson.

"No, there's no more," said Sally, "and I don't think there's any for you, Mrs. Lawson."

"Look again, Sally," said Mrs. Lawson, "I'm sure there must be one."

"Sally!" cried a voice from the inner room.

"There's mother calling," said Sally.

"Any letters for the Black Bull?" said Bill, Mrs. Green's factotum.

"I'll see," said Sally.

"Sally, I say!" screamed Mrs. Dunn, again, from the inner room.

"My! how mother does screech!" exclaimed Sally. "I'm coming presently, mother. I can't do two things at once."

"Come here directly, you minx!" cried Mrs. Dunn, in a still louder key, "or I'll fetch you—that I will!" Whereupon, Sally gathered

the letters into her apron, and proceeded to obey her mother's summons.

"Why didn't you come when I called you, you slut, eh?"

"'Cause I was a-giving out the letters, to be sure," said Sally.

"Here, give the letters to me! Put them here upon the bed, that I may see who they're for. Who was that I heard asking for their letters?"

"There was Mrs. Lawson," answered Sally, sulkily, not well pleased at her mother's appearing to distrust her capability of fulfilling the office she had given her, and therefore not disposed to make herself communicative and agreeable. The letters were not very numerous; however, as many as there were, Mrs. Dunn examined pretty closely, looking at the superscription of every one. When she had gone through them, she hastily gathered them all up together, threw them into Sally's apron, and told her to go back, and give them to the people that asked for them, and to remember there were three for the Castle; and then, lying down in her bed, she drew the clothes over her shoulders, and disposed herself to sleep.

"Well, Sally Dunn, am I to wait here all day for my letter?" said Mrs. Lawson.

"It isn't my fault," said Sally; "it's mother's."

"I wants the letters for the Bull," said Bill.

"Any letters for us to-day?" said the groom from the Castle.

"Yes, here's three," replied Sally, handing them over.

"Oh," said the groom, examining them, "no letter from Calderwood; then master'll be home to-day."

"Is it true there's to be a ball up at the Castle when he comes back?" inquired Mrs. Lawson.

"Yes," replied the groom. "I've been riding all over the country with the cards. There's a good deal of company coming to stay. Some of 'em are to be here to-day; and master'll be home to dinner. We shall have fine doings, the butler says."

"There's no letter for you, Mrs. Lawson," said Sally.

"It's a shame of Lawson not to write," said the lady, turning away, with a disappointed air, whilst the groom mounted his horse and

rode off, and Bill, from the Black Bull, went back empty handed.

In the meanwhile, Lucy had hurried away with her letter, and being too impatient to wait till she got home to see its contents, she diverged from the straight road, and, crossing a stile, she took her way by the fields; and as soon as she was out of sight of the village, she drew the important packet from her bosom, and opened it.

Pale, pale grew her cheeks as she perused it! The paper shook in her hand like an aspen leaf trembling in the wind—her bosom swelled—her eyes filled with tears—her knees bent under her—and, unable to proceed, overcome by grief and astonishment, she seated herself on the step of a stile, and, after pressing the letter to her bosom and to her lips, she laid her head in her lap, and yielded to the agony of her heart in a passion of tears.

For some time she wept bitterly; then, hastily raising her head, as struck by a sudden recollection, she looked again at the letter. "It's to-day!" she exclaimed. "Oh, my God, help me!" Then she folded the paper, and having placed it in her bosom, she dried her eyes; and, going to a little brook hard by, she

stooped down and bathed her face, in order to remove the traces of her tears; and then, having smoothed her hair, tied her bonnet as closely as she could over her face, and pinned her shawl neatly, so that there should appear no symptoms of disorder about her person, she retraced her steps, and proceeded home through the village. Several people stopped her to ask if her brother was returned; for his absence was generally known, and although the motive of it had not been communicated beyond their own family, there was a shrewd suspicion abroad, that his expedition was in some way connected with Jessie and the baronet.

Presently she met Mrs. Matthieson. Mrs. Matthieson had dreamt, on the preceding night, that she had a letter from Jessie—she had also seen a letter in the candle, as she was going to bed, and she was on her way to the post-office to inquire for it.

"So Mrs. Lawson tells me Leonard's away after Jessie," she said.

Mrs. Lawson's apt to say more than she knows," replied Lucy. "My brother's only gone from home for a few days. He can't go after her, when we don't know where she is, you know."

"Ah," said Mrs. Matthieson, who was a person that took the world very smoothly, and was not in the habit of making herself miserable, till she knew she had cause, "Jessie 'll be back by and by—he shouldn't fret and take on so. I shouldn't wonder, after all, if she's gone up to my sister that's in Lunnun. She always said she should like to see Lunnun; and I've a mind to write to my sister, and ask if she knows anything about her."

"I should think it very likely," replied Lucy, anxious to get away, "and if I were you, I'd write directly and inquire."

"I believe I will," said Mrs. Matthieson, "and I'll go to the shop and get a sheet of paper now whilst I think of it."

"There's no letter from Leonard, father," said Lucy, when she arrived at home.

Geordie uttered a groan, and shook his head.

"What's the use of groaning and shaking your head there?" said Hannah," "instead of going to look for the poor boy. You should have gone this morning, as I told you; you'd have been at Calderwood afore now."

"And who's to look after my business whilst I'm gone?" said Geordie. "Suppose

there comes a frost and spoils the potatoes afore I get them up."

"What signifies the potatoes!" exclaimed Hannah.

"They signify a great deal to me, woman, and to you, too. Better ask what signifies a daft lad that can't guide himself."

"Leonard's no worse than other young men," replied the mother. "There's no harm in him, poor fellow, but you're always down upon Leonard if he does the least thing."

"Leonard's no amiss if he war better guided," answered Geordie; "but the lad's clean daft about that lass Jessie, and you encourage him in it. Oh, woman! take care ye're no sorry for it one day!"

"You'll have more cause to be sorry, may be, for not going to look for him as I begged and prayed of you," replied Hannah, with some bitterness. For as, in fact, her conscience was by no means clear with respect to her management of her son, and as she felt acutely the magnitude of her error in having allowed him to leave home unknown to his father, she was somewhat sore and irritable on the subject.

"Mind my words, and if anything happens to the boy, remember whose fault it is."

"When that happens," replied Geordie, "we shall have no need to cast out at one another about whose fault it is; nor, may be, no inclination neither."

"I don't say I was right to let him go—may be, I'd better have kept him; but who'd have thought he'd have stayed away all this time? I thought, sure, he'd been back next morning."

"Ay, ay," replied Geordie, "that's always the way when people do foolish things—they're astonished at the consequences of their folly."

"Nobody does such foolish things as them that think themselves over wise," replied Hannah. "If it was foolish in me to let him go, it's worse in you not to go and look after him."

"I'll go to-morrow, woman, if he's not back to night."

"May be to-morrow 'll be too late."

"We must hope not, mother," said Lucy. "If anything had happened ill to Leonard, we should have heard of it, one way or another.

I saw one of the grooms from the Castle, at the Post-office; they see so many people, they'd have been sure to know if anything particular had happened."

"God knows!" said Mrs. Graham, who was of an anxious disposition, especially where her darling son was concerned; "I don't feel easy in my mind about him, at all."

"Cheer up, woman!" said Geordie, "and aye put your trust in Providence. Time enough to meet sorrow, when sorrow comes."

"Come, Lucy!" said Hannah, sharply, "what are you standing so for, doing nothing! Ha'nt you got any work to do?"

"Yes, mother," replied Lucy, "but I've got such a head-ache, I think I should like to go for a walk."

"Ha'nt you just come from a walk?" said Hannah.

"Why not let the girl do as she likes?" said Geordie. "I'm sure she works hard enough."

"What do you know about women's work?" said Hannah. "Leave that to me, if you please. Sit down to your work, Lucy!"

Lucy obeyed in silence, and Geordie, shaking his head, and looking compassionately at her,

declared she looked pale, and that by and by she should go to the potato field with him, which, about an hour afterwards, he summoned her to do; and Hannah, who by that time had somewhat relented, made no objection. So Lucy went.

When it grew too dark to work longer out of doors, Geordie came home, and when, having put off his working dress, and washed his hands, he seated himself at the tea table, he inquired where Lucy was.

"I don't know," replied Hannah. "Didn't she come in with you?"

"No," answered Geordie; "she left me presently after we went out, to take a walk. I suppose she's somewhere in the house. You'd better call her."

Whereon, Mrs. Graham went to the foot of the stairs, and called "Lucy!" and when Lucy did not answer, Geordie rose and called "Lucy" too. Then they went to the back door and called her, and then to the front; but no Lucy answered. They both agreed it was very odd, because they never knew the girl stay out without their knowing where she was in their lives before. Where could she be? She *must* come presently, so they sat down to their tea;

but when they had finished it, there were no more signs of Lucy than when they began it. The thing became still more strange—all manner of conjectures were started. Could she be gone to her aunt's? Could she be gone to Mrs. Lawson's? Perhaps she was gone to Mrs. Matthieson's, to ask if she had heard anything of Jessie — perhaps she had gone to speak to Lady Eastlake about her work. Hour after hour passed, and still Lucy came not.

"Good Lord!" cried Hannah Graham, "sure*ly*, she's not gone after her brother!"

"I hope not," said Geordie.

"There she is!" said Mrs. Graham, hearing the sound of a footstep on the little gravel walk before the house. "I'll give it her well for staying out so long."

"Wait, woman, till you know what cause she had," said Geordie.

The latch was lifted, and the new-comer appeared; but it was not Lucy—it was Mrs. Lawson. She had intended to come up, and take a cup of tea, but she had looked in at Mrs. Dunn's as she came by, to ask how she was. The cold was better, and Mrs. Dunn had made her stay and take tea there; but she

did not like to go home without seeing Mrs. Graham, so she had just dropped in for a moment.

She was so bent upon making this speech, that it was impossible to get in a word till she had finished it. She knew Geordie did not like meddling folks, and she had an instinctive notion that he thought her one; and she did not wish him to suspect that the real motive of her visit was curiosity about Leonard's absence, and Lucy's letter. As soon as she came to the end of her oration—

"You haven't seen Lucy, have you?" burst from the lips of both father and mother.

"Lucy! no; where is she?"

"That's what we want to know," answered Hannah. "She went out with her father this afternoon, when he went to dig the potatoes, and we've never seen her since."

"She went to take a walk," said Geordie, "and I expected to find her at home before me. I can't think where she can be."

"She couldn't have been to my sister's," said Hannah, "else you'd have heard of her."

"I'm sure she hasn't been there since the

morning," said Mrs. Lawson. "Didn't she say which way she was going?"

"She only said she was going to take a walk," said Geordie.

"It's very odd," said Mrs. Lawson. "She can't have met with any accident, sure?"

"God forbid!" ejaculated Geordie.

"What accident could she meet with?" said Hannah.

"Oh, woman! there's accidents enow," said Geordie; "but Lucy's a steady, thoughtful lass. She's no like to run herself into danger."

"There wasn't anything in the letter, was there?" said Mrs. Lawson.

"What letter?" inquired Hannah.

"The letter she got this morning from William Bell."

"She got no letter this morning from William Bell," said Hannah.

"Didn't she? But she did, though," answered Mrs. Lawson. "Didn't she mention it to you?"

"Not a word," said Hannah, turning very red in the face. "Are you sure she got one? How do you know she did?"

"Because I saw it. I was at the post-

office to inquire for a letter from Lawson, when Sally Dunn gave it her."

"That's not like Lucy," said Geordie, "not to mention it. There must have been some ill news in it. My mind misgives me."

As for Hannah, she seemed struck dumb.

"Now I think of it," continued Geordie, "the girl looked pale and ill when she came in."

"But where can she be gone?" said Hannah, making an effort to recover her speech. "What can the letter have to do with her staying out all this while?"

"She can't be gone off to William, sure?" said Mrs. Lawson.

"Na, na, she's no done that," said Geordie.

"Hark!" said Mrs. Lawson, "what's that!"

"There's somebody at the garden gate," said Hannah.

"Please God, it's her!" said Geordie.

A step was heard very slowly approaching the door. Hannah turned deadly pale.

"Get up, Geordie, and see who it is," said she, in a faltering voice.

Geordie rose, but before he could reach the door, their ears were assailed by a terrific

scream, and immediately there was a sound as of something falling heavily on the threshold.

Hannah, with her lips as white as her cheeks, and her eyes staring upon the door, sat as if she were turned into stone. Mrs. Lawson's eyes were fixed on the door, too, as, with a mixture of curiosity and terror, she awaited what its opening was to disclose.

"The Lord guide us! what's that?" ejaculated Geordie, as he advanced to open it. "Bring the candle, woman!" said he, stooping down to ascertain who or what it was that lay at his feet.

Hannah attempted to rise, but her knees failed her, and she sunk back in her chair. Mrs. Lawson rose, and took the candle.

"Lord save us! It's Lucy Graham, as sure as I'm alive!" she exclaimed. "What can have happened to her?"

"Is she dead?" asked Hannah, in a hollow voice, as Geordie lifted his daughter in his arms, and brought her into the room.

"I think she's only in a faint," said Mrs. Lawson. "We'd better loosen her things, and sprinkle her face with cold water."

This was done, but Lucy still remained insensible.

"Lay her on the bed," said Geordie, "while I go for the doctor to see what's the matter with her;" and with few words, but an anxious heart, the father bent his steps to the village.

CHAPTER XII

"Mischief is like the cockatrice's eyes—
Sees first and kills; or is seen first, and dies."
MUSTAPHA.

——— "Ira quæ tegitur nocet."

WE must now take up our narrative some hours earlier, when Lucy, who, unobserved by her father, having quitted the potato field, set out on the expedition which terminated so mysteriously.

Having first crossed several fields, she climbed over a gate, which brought her to the high road, along which she proceeded at a rapid pace for about two miles; she then struck into a narrow lane, and, by cross-roads and fields, advanced about three miles further. Her haste appeared extreme, for she frequently rather ran than walked, whilst the

deepest anxiety was painted on her countenance. She was also evidently desirous of avoiding observation. When she saw a passenger approaching, she more than once crossed a stile into the fields till he had passed; but as the way she took was not much frequented, she did not meet many persons. One man asked her if she was going so fast to meet her sweetheart; and a beggar-man, with a child, importuned her for charity. Once or twice, betwixt her speed and her agitation, she lost breath, and was obliged to stop to recover it; and although the afternoon was chilly, she was so heated, by the same causes, that she was obliged to unpin her shawl, and untie her bonnet.

Lovely she was to look upon, in her neat pink cotton gown, black Norwich shawl, and straw bonnet, tied down with a pink ribbon; her cheeks flushed with exercise, her rosy lips parted, just shewing the rows of pearly teeth within, and her rich brown hair hanging in long and clustering ringlets over her face.

At length she reached the borders of a wood, intersected by narrow paths, and into one of these she struck, and proceeded along it till she came to a small open area, where there lay

four large stones at right angles, looking as if they had been placed there as seats, for four persons to sit in conclave upon some knotty question of rural politics or woodland economy.

When she came in view of this spot, she somewhat slackened her pace; and on reaching it, she paused, and, having first looked around and listened, to ascertain if any sound indicated that she was not alone, she seated herself on one of the stones, with a countenance strongly indicative of anxiety and expectation. Presently she drew her letter from her bosom and read it. She was still engrossed by the paper, when, a sound catching her ear, she hastily folded it, and restored it to her bosom, and breathless with agitation, sat with her eyes intently fixed in the direction whence the sound proceeded. A moment more, and two beautiful red and white setters sprang out of the wood, and bounded to her feet. At sight of them she started up, clasped her hands, ejaculating, "Oh! merciful God!" and then, with every indication of terror and dismay, she was about to fly; but her purpose was arrested, the dogs apparently thinking her attempt at flight suspicious, flew at her with

a fury, which effectually barred her progress, and, in a moment more, she heard a loud, clear voice cry, "Down, Rover!—down, Duchess! Come in, you curs!" and Sir John Eastlake emerged from the cover, and stood before her. He was dressed in a shooting jacket, and carried his gun on his shoulder.

"What!" cried he, after giving the dogs a kick, and bidding them lie down. "My pretty Lucy! Is it possible!" and throwing his arm round her waist, he added—"why, this is kind indeed! for I must flatter myself nothing could have brought you here but the resolution to make me happy."

"No, sir, indeed," cried Lucy, struggling to disengage herself from his arms; "I never thought of such a thing; I wouldn't have come for the world if I had known you were coming this way."

"I can't believe you, Lucy; I wont believe you," said Sir John, still detaining her in his embrace. "What else would have brought you alone to this solitary place, so far from home? Why, child, it will be dark before you get back. It's lucky you have me to take care of you."

"Oh, no, no, sir! I don't want you to take

care of me; I'm not afraid—at least, I'm not afraid of being alone. Pray, pray, let me go."

"Let you go, you little rogue! I dare say, when I've got you here so snugly, all to myself! Come, now, Lucy, be honest, and say the truth; you heard from somebody that I meant to shoot through the woods home, and you came here to meet me, didn't you?"

"No, sir, I did not," replied Lucy, firmly; "and I'd rather have gone a hundred miles another way than have met you."

"I don't believe you, Lucy; that's the way you women try to enhance the value of your favours."

"You know very well you'll never have any favours from me, sir; and for God Almighty's sake let me go!"

"Indeed, I wont," said he, pressing her closer to his breast, and trying to kiss her. "You're devilish pretty, Lucy; and, upon my soul, I'm very fond of you—I am indeed! I've thought of nothing but you all the while I have been away. I was quite impatient to get back."

"Yes," said Lucy, looking at him with indignation; "I dare say, when you got tired of the poor girl at Hillside."

"At Hillside!" said he. "Who told you anything about Hillside?"

"It's of no consequence who told me, sir; and it's no business of mine, unless it's Jessie that was there."

"And suppose it was Jessie. You wouldn't be jealous of her, I hope—would you? You ought to have too good an opinion of yourself to be jealous of Jessie."

"I'm jealous of nobody, sir; and I wish *you'd* a good opinion of me, and then you wouldn't talk such nonsense to me. You must let me go, sir. You've no right to behave in this way to me."

"Behave in what way, Lucy?" said he laughing, and endeavouring to draw her towards one of the stones, that he might seat himself, and take her upon his knee; "I'm sure I'm very quiet. You needn't be afraid of me."

"Let me go, let me go!" she cried, wringing her hands. "If you don't, I'll cry for help—I will, indeed!"

"And who will hear you, Lucy? You may cry long enough, before any one comes to your assistance here."

"Perhaps you're mistaken, sir," said Lucy.

"Perhaps I've a protector nearer than you think."

"The devil you have!" exclaimed Sir John, looking about to discover if any one was at hand. "Then I've a rival, have I? Let me see if he'll dare to come and take you from my arms. So then, Lucy, if you didn't come here to meet me, you did come to meet a lover, after all."

"And if I did, sir, what is that to you?"

"It's a great deal to me, Lucy; and he'd better not let me catch him poaching upon my manor, whoever he is."

"I wonder, sir, you can like to expose yourself in such a way to people so much beneath you."

"I look upon every pretty woman as my equal, Lucy, let her be born where she may. Love, you know, equalizes all ranks."

"What *is* to become of me?" exclaimed Lucy, in accents of extreme distress.

"Come here!" said he, drawing her towards the seat, "and I'll tell you what will become of you, if you will be a good girl, and listen to me."

"I wont listen," she said; but as she spoke, she half turned her head, and her whole person

suddenly assumed the attitude of intense listening. There was a slight rustling in the wood behind her; the dogs, too, heard it, and lifting up their heads, they utterred a low growl.

"So," said Sir John, turning his eyes in the same direction, with a mixed expression of displeasure and curiosity in his countenance, "he's coming, is he?" And whilst with his left hand he continued to grasp Lucy firmly by the arm, with the other he picked up a stout dog whip, which lay at his feet, and with which he was apparently prepared to chastise his rival.

"For the Lord above's sake!" cried Lucy, sinking on her knees at his feet, and evidently seized with a fresh access of terror, "let me go, or go yourself! There'll be mischief—there will, indeed! Oh, go, go! For God Almighty's sake go, or let me go!"

The earnestness of her prayer, and the intensity of her fear, were so evident, that Sir John, who was not what is commonly called bad-hearted, and who sinned from a thoughtless selfishness which had been strengthened by indulgence, and from a total misapprehension of the character of women—at least, of such

women as Lucy Graham—shewed symptoms of relenting: the expression of his countenance was changing—his grasp was relaxing, and he was in the act of saying "Don't be frightened, girl!" when there was a report of fire-arms. The dogs started up and barked—a whizzing noise seemed to pass directly over Lucy's head, whilst Sir John, interrupted in his speech, stood for a moment, his eyes fixed with a deadly glare on some object which he appeared to see behind her, and, with an effort, slowly raising the whip, and presenting it in a theatening attitude in that direction, he murmured, "Damnation!" then as his jaw fell and seemed to be fixing into eternal silence, he gasped out "Groves! Groves!" and then his hold of Lucy's arm was loosened, his complexion assumed the ghastly hue of death, his features became rigid, and he sank to the ground a corpse.

Lucy uttered one scream—loud, long, and piercing—and then she, too, sank upon the earth, not wounded, but insensible. The dogs smelt about them for a moment, and then lay down as quietly as before, apparently unconscious of what had happened.

CHAPTER XIII.

"On the bare earth exposed he lies,
With not a friend to close his eyes."
ALEXANDER'S FEAST.

"Call for the robin red-breast and the wren,
Since o'er shady groves they hover,
And with leaves and flowers do cover
The friendless bodies of unburied men."
THE WHITE DEVIL.

"Was this your handy-work?"
IBID.

THE two bodies lay side by side upon the earth, but scarcely a minute had elapsed ere a young man burst through the cover, and sprang into the middle of the area. His aspect was wild, his dress was disordered, and his features distorted by rage. "I was sure

of it!" he cried, as he threw himself on the ground beside the girl; "I was sure it was her voice! Lucy! Lucy! my girl!" and then, perceiving that her gown was stained with blood, for the stream that issued from the mouth of the Baronet had already reached her dress, he uttered a cry of fury that might almost have burst from the throat of a wild beast; but on ascertaining that the blood was not hers, and that she had only fainted, he immediately sought for the means of recovering her. There was a little pool of water hard by, and to this he ran, and having fetched some in his hat, he sprinkled her face and hands. After a while, she opened her eyes, and the first thing she beheld was the face of her lover hanging over her.

"Oh, William!" she murmured, with a deep sigh, apparently unconscious of where she was and of what had occurred.

"Lucy, dear," he said, "don't be frightened—you're safe with me—but what has happened? What does all this mean?"

"Happened?" she repeated, as, rising from her recumbent posture, she sat up and stared about her with a bewildered air—"what *has* happened?"

But in an instant, as the body of the baronet met her eye, she was upon her feet. "Fly!" she cried, "fly!" clasping her hands in agony. "Oh, William, William, how could you commit such a dreadful act?"

"What act?" said William. "Kill that man! I didn't kill him—I found him lying there dead, and you beside him—not but I dare say he well deserved what he's got. What brought him here, Lucy? and how came you to be together?"

"You didn't kill him!" said Lucy, too much engrossed by his answer to attend to his questions; "wasn't it you that shot him?"

"No, to be sure it wasn't," replied William; "I wont say but I might have done it, if I'd had the opportunity—but I didn't do it."

"Then who did?" asked Lucy, in amazement.

"That's more than I know," answered William. "I saw nobody."

"Is he dead?" she asked.

"I believe he is," replied William, examining the body.

"Oh," she said, "perhaps he has only fainted; let us see if we can't bring him to himself."

They then fetched water, and used what restorative means they could, but in vain.

"Who can have done it?" said Lucy.

"What was he doing here?" said William. "How came he to be with you, at all? I heard his voice some time before I heard the report."

"It was an accident," she replied. "He has been staying at Calderwood, and he said he was shooting his way home. He couldn't have expected to meet me, any more than I expected to meet him; for nobody knew of my coming, not even father and mother!"

"And when he met you, he wanted to behave like a villain, I suppose, didn't he!" and then struck by a sudden thought, he let the body he was tending fall from his arms, and starting to his feet, he seized her wrist almost roughly, whilst he said, looking earnestly in her face, "What was it made you faint, Lucy? I heard you scream—he hasn't harmed you, has he? The villain hasn't insulted you?"

"No, no, William, he only talked nonsense to me, and wouldn't let me go. I fainted from fright when I heard the shot, and saw him fall. But is there no life in him? Are you sure he's dead!"

"He's dead enough," said William. "He'll never talk nonsense to you or anybody else again. But, Lucy, what does all this mean? Why didn't you write? Why did you drive me to distraction by not answering my letters?"

"I give you my word of honour, William, I've never had a single letter from you till the one I got this morning, since you wrote to tell me you expected soon to be made a corporal, though I've written to you over and over again."

"Not had my letters!"

"Not one, I assure you!"

"And do you say you've written to me?" asked William.

"Very often. Didn't you receive my letters?"

"Never," replied he. "I think it's at least three months since I'd a letter from you. There's been some foul play between us, Lucy. Did you put your letters in the post yourself?"

"Always."

"So did I," said he. "It must be your aunt that has stopped them—no one else could get them. What could be her motive?"

"To separate us, I'm afraid," said Lucy,

" unless my mother asked her to do it. But, William, we're standing here talking, and that poor man lying there dead. What are we to do with the body?"

" When you go back to the village and tell them what has happened, there'll be plenty of people to look to that. But I've many things to say to you first, Lucy."

" See, there's his gun!" said she, as it caught her eye where Sir John had placed it, leaning against one of the stones. " Could that have gone off and shot him?"

" I'll see if it's discharged," said William, taking it up; but at that moment they were startled by a whistle proceeding from the wood, on hearing which the dogs jumped up and ran into the cover.

" There's some one coming," said Lucy.

" And I shall be found here," said William, glancing at the body.

" But you are innocent!" said she.

" But I'm a deserter, Lucy!"

" Oh, Father in Heaven!" she cried, " and I've let you stay here! Fly, William! Not that way—not that way—you'll meet them! Over the wall—over the wall! Run for your life, there's not a moment to lose!" Nor was

there, for William was scarcely out of sight when the two dogs returned, bounding and gambolling, followed by Mr. Groves with a gun and a game bag over his shoulder.

"Ah, Lucy!" said he, as she stood with her face and lips of an ashy paleness, unconsciously staring in the direction William had taken, "are you here? Ha!" he cried, on perceiving the body, "who has done this?"

"I don't know," said Lucy, scarcely able to articulate; "I believe it was the gun went off."

"The gun went off and shot him!" said Grove.

"I believe so," said she, trembling like a leaf.

"Humph!" said he; "and what was it brought you here at all?"

"I came," she said, hesitating, "just for a walk."

"Rather a long walk," he said, looking sharply at her. "And then you met Sir John?"

"Yes."

"And he wanted to kiss you, I suppose; didn't he?"

"He was behaving very foolishly," said

she; "and I think, perhaps, whilst I was struggling with him, we may have touched the gun and made it go off."

"Then you saw nobody do it?"

"Nobody."

"Well, it's a dreadful accident — very dreadful! We must try and get some assistance to carry the body to the Castle. Will you mind staying here whilst I go?" he said, after a moment's reflection.

"No," she said, "I'll stay;" for she thought it might be safer for William that she should stay than he, not being certain that the fugitive was yet further removed than the other side of the wall.

"Very well," he said, "I'll be as quick as I can."

As he was going, however, he suddenly stopped, and turned back. "Are you sure he's dead?" he asked, stooping over the body.

"I'm afraid so," said Lucy; "he never stirred after he fell."

"Nor spoke? Didn't he say anything?"

"Nothing," replied she, "except when he was shot, he called for you; just as he was falling, he called '*Groves.*'"

"Ah, that was natural; he knew I couldn't

be far off. Ay, he's dead," he continued, "and fast getting cold. Well, I'll be as quick as I can; the first person I meet I'll send to you."

"No you needn't," said Lucy, who thought only of William's danger; "I don't mind staying at all."

As soon as he was out of sight, she ran to look over the wall, but William was not there; she ventured to call him in a low voice, but there was no answer. She had partly hoped and partly feared that he was still at hand; but it appeared that he had gone quite away. Where would he go? What would he do? And since there was no security for their letters, how was she to hear from him? She saw how critical his situation was. If any traces of his having been there were discovered, he would infallibly be suspected of the murder. Every circumstance would combine to throw suspicion upon him. Even she herself had nothing but his word for it that he was innocent; that word she firmly believed, but she was aware that others would not. Even as a deserter his danger and difficulties were great, but this unhappy event aggravated them a thousand-fold. There was

here food for deep and anxious reflection; and, for a time, her mind was so entirely engrossed by the subject, that she could think of nothing else. But this train of thought gradually led to another. If William was not the murderer, who was? The hypothesis of the gun going off, which she had suggested, she did not believe. She remembered that she had heard a rustling in the wood before the report; that the shot had certainly proceeded from behind her, and that the ball had whizzed over her head. She also believed, from the expression of the murdered man's face, that his eyes had been fixed on the assassin when he fell. Who could it be? A fearful suspicion was finding its way into her mind. Could it be her brother? Many a time Leonard had said the Baronet deserved to be shot. He had been long in a state of great irritation and excitement. His prolonged absence was unaccounted for. He might have learnt it was Jessie that had been living at Hillside; and, maddened by rage and jealousy, he might have followed Sir John from Calderwood with the intention of shooting him; or, perhaps, undecided, had been suddenly wrought up to the deed by witnessing his behaviour to herself. If it were

her brother, whither would he fly? What would become of him—and what would be the distress of her parents—and what hers, who had the lives of both her lover and her brother in jeopardy!

These fearful thoughts occupied her for a long time; but, at length, she began to wonder that nobody came—but she had told Mr. Groves he need not send any one till he reached the Castle. Now she regretted that she had done so; it was growing rapidly dark, and the indistinctness that the objects around were beginning to assume, was becoming painful. She began also to be acutely sensible of the deep silence that surrounded her, which caused the slightest rustle amongst the leaves to strike upon the ear with a startling distinctness. If a bird stirred on its roost, or a field-mouse tripped lightly over the fallen leaves to its nest, her heart was in her throat.

Hitherto, the death of the baronet, sudden and fearful as it was, had made much less impression on her mind than might have been expected. It had been followed so quickly by other events, that the fact, in all its horrors, had not had time to take hold of her imagination. From the insensibility that succeeded

the shock, she had awakened to the sight of her lover—then came the dreadful apprehension of his guilt, and the inexpressible belief of finding him innocent; to that ensued the interest of mutual disclosures both painful and surprising, interrupted by fears for his immediate safety, and by the arrival of Mr. Groves. Her mind had been carried away by the hurry of the action, from the first grand event of the drama; but, now, the reaction that ensued, together with the quietness and silence that reigned around her, brought the fearful reality vividly before her—she *felt* as well as *knew* that Sir John Eastlake was dead; she conceived the circumstance in all its horrors, and she saw that the body lying at her feet was a corpse—the corpse of a murdered man. Every moment she became more sensibly alive to the terrible truth, and every moment, as the imperfect light rendered the outline of the body less distinct, it assumed new forms of frightful death. Sometimes she thought it moved—then, that she heard it breathe—then, that the murderer would come back to inspect his work, and finding her there, would slay her, too. She sat like a statue—as white, as cold, as still; her features fixed, her respirations slow, like

those of a person expiring under the influence of a narcotic; her unwinking eyes immovably fixed upon the dark mass before her—she seemed to be growing into stone— all petrifying, except her senses of sight and hearing, which, strained to the utmost intensity, seemed to be absorbing all the other functions of life.

Suddenly, there was a stir—the wings of a night-bird fluttering through the foliage, sounded like the rushing of a thousand spirits to some nocturnal rite; she started from her seat and fled—fled with superhuman speed and fleetness, by road and by field—mile after mile disappeared under her swift feet, for the murdered man strode fast behind her—on she went, sustained by her ecstasy of fear, till she came within sight of her father's cottage—then, the overstrained chords relaxed; as the excited mind becalmed, the exhausted body yielded—her strength failed her—she crawled on till she reached the door, and then sank fainting to the earth.

CHAPTER XIV.

"L'amour propre est ce qu'il y a au monde de plus inflexible."—De Stael.

"——— Momento mare vertitur:
Eodem die ubi luserunt, navigia sorbentur."

"Your reverend mother
Is grown a very old woman in two hours."
The White Devil.

The scene in the drawing-room of Eastlake Castle was brilliant. Sir John was on the eve of attaining his thirty-fifth year; and it was his mother's desire that the event should serve as a pretext for a grand ball at the Castle. She was in the humour for a little gaiety, and she wanted to draw a few of her fashionable London friends about her. There was shooting for the gentlemen, and a ball for the ladies, and several of the company had

already arrived. The late Sir John Eastlake, the father of the present baronet, had died when his son was only five years old, leaving his wife, who was many years younger than himself, and in the blaze of her beauty, sole guardian of this, his only child, or, rather, she naturally became so, there being no will appointing others. She thus stepped into the situation that was of all others the most agreeable to her, for she loved power and splendour, as well, perhaps better, than she loved her son; but this last fact she would not have admitted, nor, indeed, had she ever sufficiently analyzed her feelings to be conscious of it; she is not the first person that has mistaken the object of their own affections.

Her husband had inherited the large Eastlake estates rather unexpectedly, in consequence of two somewhat premature deaths; and she was now in a much more elevated and prosperous condition than she had ventured to anticipate at the period of her marriage; for though well born she was poor, and her prudent mother had seen too many beauties, so circumstanced, outstand their market, not to urge her accepting an offer where there was such a contingency, and which, if not

exactly brilliant, was otherwise unexceptionable, Mr. Eastlake being a gentleman of excellent character and respectable fortune.

Of course, all the advantages of education that wealth could purchase, were provided for the young Sir John, of which, however, he was permitted to avail himself as much or as little as he pleased; but without having any extraordinary talents, he was lively and clever, and consistently with a great deal of idleness and amusement, he contrived to acquire knowledge enough to answer the purposes of a man with thirty thousand a-year.

He grew up gallant, gay, handsome, and agreeable, but thoughtless, and without any fixed principles, especially where women were concerned; and as he had a decided *penchant* for the fair sex, he very soon shewed symptoms of falling in love, beginning, as is not unusual with young squires, at a very early age, with his tenants' pretty daughters. His tutor interposed with admonitions, but as these were not very energetically seconded by the mother, they had no permanent effect on his character. However, shortly after he was of age, he formed an attachment that seemed more likely to contribute to his honour and

happiness; but, somehow or other, a misunderstanding arose between the young couple, which the lady's parents took advantage of, to entangle her in an engagement with a nobleman of higher rank and larger fortune. This misunderstanding, the world said, if it did not originate in the machinations of Lady Eastlake, was certainly fostered by them, she being unwilling to descend from the advantageous position she enjoyed during her son's celibacy. When the young couple were irreparably separated as man and wife, by the lady's marriage, they met in society as friends, and from friends became lovers; and this *liaison*, which lasted for some years, prevented Sir John's thinking of any other serious attachment, although it did not prevent his, what he was pleased to call, "sporting on his own domain."

Lady Eastlake could not be otherwise than aware of these deviations from the straight path, both as regarded the object of his former affections, and the rustic beauties of Eastlake; but she never interfered, nor sought, by counsel or reproof, to check his vicious courses, nor betrayed by word or deed her acquaintance with them. To her he was a most kind and

affectionate son, and she doted upon him. He was her mainstay on earth, and she looked never beyond; the rock on which she built for all the luxuries of wealth, the delights of importance and the pleasures of the world; and she wilfully closed her eyes to the vices that left her in possession of what she loved so dearly. True, if he died, she would lose much more, in every way, than if a grandson of her own inherited; indeed, her situation would be especially unpleasant for various reasons. In the first place, her settlements had been drawn up when her husband was, compared to what he afterwards became, a poor man; and although after he inherited the Eastlake estates, he had fully intended to make a more adequate provision for her, he had deferred it till death overtook him. The alteration in her circumstances would, therefore, be out of all proportion. In the next place, the presumptive heir to the estate was one, of all others, whom she would least wish to see in possession of it. His name was Marmaduke Rivers, and he was the son of her late husband's sister, who had married Colonel Rivers, a soldier of fortune, for love. For a considerable time after her marriage, her bro-

ther, Mr. Eastlake, had continued single, and as the general opinion was that he was not a marrying man, there seemed a very fair prospect that her son would ultimately be the possessor of the Eastlake estates; and as her own fortune of twenty thousand pounds, and her husband's pay, was little enough to support them in the rank they held, they spent what they had, and trusted to the contingent inheritance to provide for their son.

However, when the young Marmaduke was about ten years old, Mr. Eastlake married, and soon after stepped into his rich inheritance; but as five years elapsed before a new claimant was produced, the hopes of the Rivers family were still sustained; but at the end of that period the little heir appeared, and they seemed blighted for ever. Young Marmaduke felt the disappointment bitterly; the more, as he had been for some time residing a good deal with his uncle at Eastlake; his mother being dead, and his father having accepted Sir John's offer to take charge of his son during his own absence in the West Indies, where his regiment was stationed. The boy was at a public school, and knew nothing of what was expected till he came home for his Christmas vacation, a

few days before the event that was destined so materially to affect his fortunes. He was quite old enough to feel and to understand the reverse; and as he had a considerable deal of pride, together with a great love of splendour and magnificence, his mortification and grief were excessive. And to make it worse, the foolish servants, especially the young heir's Irish nurse Nelly, took a delight in jeering him, "and putting him in a passion," as they called it, by reminding him that he was "Mr. Nobody, now; and must learn to give way to his betters." Lady Eastlake too disliked him, chiefly, perhaps, because he held that position which she thought a child of her own ought to occupy; and when at length she found herself likely to produce an heir, Master Marmaduke's disappointment, certainly, formed one element of her triumph.

From this period, Eastlake became hateful to the boy; the beauty and the splendour which had delighted him, whilst he hoped they might one day be his, now only served to aggravate his regrets; and he was glad when, being recalled to his father, he was relieved from the painful reminiscences they excited. Colonel Rivers, however, did not long survive

his return to England; he died, and the young man found himself possessed of a little patrimony, upon which a person who had never looked higher might have lived very contentedly. Not only had his father sold out before his death, and realized a handsome sum, but Sir John Eastlake, when he suddenly found himself so rich a man, had generously presented his sister with a considerable addition to her fortune, the whole of which became the property of the young Marmaduke. But, unhappily, he could not forget what he had once expected; and shortly after the death of her husband, Lady Eastlake was surprised by the intelligence, that Mr. Rivers, as the next heir to the estates, was moving to throw them into Chancery; an intention which was immediately followed up, and executed; and although for the fifteen years that ensued, till her son came of age, the allowances were so handsome, that the result of these proceedings did not in reality make much difference to her, yet it widened the breach between her and the young man; and on her part, if not on his, converted dislike into a much stronger feeling.

Thus, as we have observed, should her son die before her, leaving no posterity, her situa-

tion would, in every respect, be a very painful one—but how should he die? A man in the prime of life, with the most vigorous constitution, reasonably temperate and careful; neither hunting, nor riding steeple-chases, nor driving tandems, nor tenacious, nor quarrelsome—and surrounded by all the circumstances favourable to health and life that wealth undeniably affords—it seemed so improbable that Lady Eastlake, whose calculations postponed her own death to the latest possible period—a period so remote that she could only discern one thing certain with respect to it, and that was, that it would precede her son's—considered herself as assured of enjoying her present condition, provided her son remained single till the last hour of her existence, as if the Baronetcy, together with the estates and honours annexed to it, had all centred in her own proper person. In short, that he would outlive her, was a point she as little doubted as that he lived at all.

Thus, all her influence, which was considerable, and her policy, which was deep and vigilant, were devoted to the one darling and selfish object, of keeping her son unmarried;

and as he was already past the age in which people live in the imminent danger of falling over head and ears in love every day of their lives, and as the habits of celibacy and the confirmed love of roving, were also propitious to her wishes, the chances seemed considerably in favour of her gaining her object.

Sir John had written to his mother, that if she did not hear to the contrary, she might expect him to dinner on that evening. Towards the middle of the day, the groom arrived with his horses; his master, he said, had dismounted, and intended to come home by the wood in order to shoot a few pheasants. Mr. Groves was with him. However, when the dinner hour arrived, Sir John had not made his appearance. Lady Eastlake and her guests were assembled in the drawing room.

"He can't be shooting now, at all events," said the hostess. "He must have stopped somewhere on his way. Perhaps at Otterly."

"Not unlikely," said Lord Belton. "He has fallen in with Grenville somewhere, and he has insisted on taking him home with him—once there, there would be no possibility of his getting away. If persuasion wouldn't keep

him, Grenville would rather tie him to one of the bed-posts, than let him escape. I know Grenville of old."

"Yes," said General Goring, "Grenville has the mania of hospitality to a degree that's truly alarming. One has as much difficulty in escaping out of his house as if it were a prison, or an asylum for the insane."

"I avoid him as I would a bum-bailiff or a sheriff's officer," said Colonel Wrangham. "Once caught, it's all over with you."

"What a terrible man!" said Lady Colman. "And do you suppose he has really caught Sir John?"

"Upon my word, I'm afraid he has," said Lady Eastlake. "I can't imagine anything else that could detain him."

"Unless he has been taken in one of his own snares," said Captain Wilmot.

"Then he's got Groves with him to set him free," said Lady Eastlake. "I should be uneasy if Groves was not with him."

"Trusty Mr. Groves!" said Lord Belton. "Groves is a jewel."

"He's not without his faults," said Lady Eastlake; "but he's very much attached to Sir John. There's eight o'clock," she con-

tinued, as the or-molu clock on the mantel-piece began playing "Charmante Gabrielle." "We really must not wait any longer. I'll ring for dinner. No appearance of your master, Burton?" she said to the butler, when he answered the bell.

"No, my lady."

"Then it's no use waiting—we'll have dinner;" and presently afterwards it was announced.

"Who will take my son's place? Lord Belton, will you do me the favour?"

"With pleasure, though I shall be a very unworthy representative. Shan't I, Lady Frances?"

"It's a matter of taste," said Lady Frances, who was yet unmarried, as was also Lord Belton.

"I rather fancy Frances is of a different opinion, as well as her mother," said the Countess of Carleon, in a low voice, to Lord Belton.

"What are you saying about my opinion, mamma?" said Lady Frances. "I wish you'd only answer for your own;" for poor Lady Frances was too conscious of the correctness of the implication not to shrink from hearing it.

"Oh," said Lord Belton, who did not value

Lady Carleon's implied compliment enough to appropriate it, "Eastlake's a capital fellow! I don't know a finer fellow than Eastlake. We were at Eton together, and we were always great friends—and what a fine place this is of his! Excellent sporting country, too—by the bye, I wonder Eastlake doesn't keep hounds. Lady Eastlake, I wonder Sir John doesn't keep hounds. There couldn't be a better country to hunt over."

"Why, my son, I'm happy to say, is not very fond of hunting; and he has therefore the less merit in conforming to my wishes, in that respect. When he went out with the hounds, as a boy, it used to make me so dreadfully nervous, that I conjured him to give it up, and he has very kindly done so."

"Well, Lady Eastlake, you may flatter yourself that you have more influence than most wives would have had," said Lady Colman. "I never knew a man that gave up hunting—or anything else, indeed—to please his wife, in my life. There was poor Mrs. Greatorex—how she did entreat Mr. Greatorex to give it up—at last, she actually went on her knees to him. But he wouldn't; and I believe it was the very week after, that he broke his neck."

"Well, I think he deserved it, for his obstinacy," said Lady Eastlake.

"But *she* didn't deserve it, poor thing!" returned Lady Colman. "You know she was left miserably. She'd had no settlements, for it was a runaway match; and his personal property was almost nothing."

"And didn't he make any provision for her in his will?"

"He never could be persuaded to make one," said Lady Colman. "Many a time she conjured him to do it, but he wouldn't."

"Ah," said Lord Belton, "he was afraid she wouldn't air his linen so carefully, I dare say. Greatorex was extremely curious on that point. He was persuaded he was to die some day of a damp shirt, and he insisted on her superintending that branch of his personal economy herself."

"Well, really, till Greatorex died," said Captain Wilmot, "I never could comprehend his wife's devoted attachment. I remember, pious Mrs. Huntingdon used to lift up her hands, and pronounce it a beautiful instance of conjugal affection."

"Well, it's a shocking thing to be left in that manner," said Lady Colman, "after being

bored with a man so long—taking such trouble about him as she did, too."

"You know, Greatorex was a bit of a chemist," said General Goring. "Perhaps he analyzed the nature of her affection a little too curiously."

"She got just as much as she deserved," said Sir James Colman. "She's a d——d—humph—I wont say what."

"No, for Heaven's sake don't!" said his wife.

"I hope Lady Colman's wasn't a runaway match," said Lord Belton, in a whisper, to Lady Carleon.

"Oh, no; a splendid settlement," said the Countess.

"I'm sure she's a very good woman," said Lady Colman. "She took the greatest possible pains to cure him of his horrid habit of swearing.

"Her success was not altogether perfect, I'm afraid," said Captain Wilmot. "I understood he died damning his groom for not having drawn his girths tight enough."

"Ah, he died before his education was completed—that was not her fault, you know," observed Lord Belton.

"Eastlake has been staying at Calderwood,

hasn't he?" said General Goring to Lady Eastlake.

"He has been there nearly a fortnight," replied she. "I expected him home last week. I can't think what has kept him there so long."

"There's capital shooting there, I believe," said Captain Wilmot.

"And two remarkably pretty girls," said Lord Belton. "They were in London last season. You must have seen them, Wilmot?"

"Very handsome creatures, indeed," returned Wilmot. "I'm not surprised at Sir John's protracted visit."

"I shouldn't wonder if he's gone back again," said Lord Belton. "Tried coming away, and found it wouldn't do."

"Gone back to look after his heart," said Wilmot.

"Hush!" said Lady Carleon. "You're on dangerous ground—there are some things that shouldn't be mentioned even in jest. You know he's not to marry."

"He will, when his time comes, like everybody else," said Lord Belton. "It's like dying—people can't help it."

"What a cheerful simile!" said Wilmot. "It quite disposes one to matrimony—doesn't it, Lady Frances?"

"It does not dispose me," replied Lady Frances, who thought Lord Belton was manifesting a great deal more indifference than became him. "I think people are much better single."

"So do I," said Belton, "if one could only keep so."

"What sort of neighbourhood have you here, Lady Eastlake?" inquired Captain Wilmot.

"Rather dispersed, but very good," replied the hostess. "You'll see them all on the twentieth."

"Ah, I recollect, Eastlake mentioned you were going to have a ball."

"It's his birthday," said Eady Eastlake, "and I always like to distinguish it by some sort of celebration. A day," she added, "which I have so much reason to rejoice in."

"You have every reason, indeed!" said Lady Carleon. "Every motive for pride and satisfaction."

"I am very fortunate," said Lady Eastlake; "and very sensible of it, I assure you.

Burton! Where is Burton?" she added, looking round. "Why does he leave the room?"

"He was sent for, my lady," replied one of the footmen. "Somebody wanted him."

"Wanted him! Who could want him? Is it your master?"

"I don't know, my lady."

"Go and see! I dare say it is."

"No, my lady," said another footman; "it's only Mr. Groves."

"Without his master? How very extraordinary! Desire Groves to come here, directly!"

"He's shut up at Otterly, rely upon it," said Lord Belton. "We shall be obliged to make a *sortie* to effect his release."

"Where is Groves?" said Lady Eastlake. "Why doesn't he come and explain where his master is? Desire him to come immediately."

"Groves is the Ambassador," said Lord Belton, "sent to entreat our aid."

One servant after another left the room, but nobody came back again, though, by the sound of their voices, they all seemed to be congregated in the hall.

"This is really insupportable!" exclaimed Lady Eastlake, about to rise from her chair.

"Give me leave!" said Lord Belton; and, going to the door, he called out, "Mr. Groves?" in a tone of authority that produced an immediate "Yes, my lord;" and Groves stepped forward.

"Come in!" said Lord Belton. "Lady Eastlake wishes to speak to you."

Mr. Groves was a good-looking young man, with a fair complexion, grey eyes, and light brown hair, with the air, dress, and manner, of a valet of the first water; grave, silent, and, when in his usual assiette, perfectly collected and self-possessed. His complexion was generally rather florid, but it was now stone colour; and his features had a fixed expression of sternness that looked as if he had been screwing himself up to the degree of firmness, or hardness, necessary to the dreadful task of communicating to Lady Eastlake the lamentable fate of her son. His hair, which generally curled, was now quite wet with perspiration, and hung matted and disordered over his forehead.

"Where have you left your master?" said Lady Eastlake; "why is he not returned?"

Mr. Groves' lips moved; but in spite of the efforts he had made to work himself up to the

desired pitch of resolution, his voice failed him, and nothing audible proceeded from them.

"Where?" said Lady Eastlake; for the candle light and the position in which he stood, somewhat concealed the expression of his countenance, and seeing the motion of his lips, she fancied he had spoken.

"There has been an accident," said Mr. Groves, in indistinct accents.

"Where? at Otterley? I don't hear what you say, Groves. Come here!"

Groves advanced a few steps, and said, with more firmness, "Master has met with an accident."

"An accident!" cried Lady Eastlake. "Good God! What accident? Why don't you speak out? Why do you keep me in this suspense? He's not hurt—he's not seriously hurt? Where have you left him?"

"He's in the wood, at the Four Stones."

"In the wood at this hour! What, has he sprained his ancle? He hasn't broken his leg?"

"No," answered Groves.

"But what *has* happened?" said Lord Belton. "Have the goodness to explain. What is the nature of the accident?"

"His gun went off"——

"Oh, God of heaven!" cried Lady Eastlake, sinking back in her chair—"he's wounded! he's killed!"

"No, no," said Lord Belton. "I hope not—the man's bewildered with the fright. Here, Groves, take a glass of wine;" and, pouring out a tumbler of Madeira, he handed it to the valet, whose hand shook and teeth chattered against the glass whilst he drank it. "Try and collect yourself, and tell us what has happened. Where is Sir John Eastlake wounded?"

"Here," answered Groves, laying his hand on his own breast.

"Oh!" groaned out Lady Eastlake, clasping her hands, and closing her eyes, which had been hitherto intensely fixed on the narrator of this dread story.

Lord Belton hesitated to pursue the inquiry. "I think," said he, looking towards the ladies, "you had better conduct Lady Eastlake to her chamber!" The ladies rose.

"Speak!" said Lady Eastlake, quitting her recumbent attitude, and sitting erect in her chair, with her eyes again fixed on the face of the valet—"speak it at once—is he dead?"

"He's dead!" said Mr. Groves, and having said the words, nature sunk under the too great effort, and he fainted.

The gentlemen rose; the ladies collected round Lady Eastlake, and Lord Belton advanced to offer her his arm, but she motioned them all back; whilst slowly, and, with a calmness almost awful under such circumstances, she rose from her seat and quitted the room. Mr. Groves was carried away by the footmen to the steward's room; Lord Belton and General Goring in one carriage, and Burton, the butler, with two footmen, in another, started immediately for the Four Stones, calling at the village for the apothecary as they passed. The rest of the company resumed their seats: Sir James Colman finished his dinner, which he saw no reason for relinquishing because his host was dead; the gentlemen took several bumpers of claret, and recommended the ladies to fortify their nerves by the same remedy; and then, in a low tone, and with countenances where amazement still sat, they discussed the dreadful occurrence and its consequences.

CHAPTER XV.

"I found them winding of Marcello's corse."
THE WHITE DEVIL.

"Now croaks the toad, and night-crows screech aloud,
Flutt'ring 'bout casements of departing souls;
Now gape the graves, and through their yawns let loose
Imprison'd spirits to revisit earth."
ANTONIO'S REVENGE.

"Thou very poor!
Why dost not weep? The jewel of thy brow,
The rich adornment that enchas'd thy breast,
Is lost." IBID.

LONG before Lord Belton and his party arrived at the Four Stones, it was perfectly dark; but by the aid of lanterns, and the voices of the dogs, who began to bark on hearing their approach, they easily found the spot.

There lay Sir John Eastlake, stiff and cold, partly glued to the earth by the blood which

had now dried, and with the whip still grasped in the hand which had held it. As there could be no question that life was not only extinct, but had been extinct some time, there was nothing for the apothecary to do; the servants, therefore, conveyed the body in their arms to the road where the carriages had been left, and the gentlemen prepared to follow them, when the doctor, who being an elderly man, and somewhat shaken by the unexpected summons he had received and the horrid spectacle that met his view, having seated himself upon one of the stones, happened to put his hand on the baronet's gun, which still lay where he had left it. This they took possession of, and then the melancholy procession returned to the Castle; and the body being undressed and laid on a bed, the doctor, who was physician, surgeon, and apothecary all in one, commenced his examination. The first thing that became evident was, that from the position in which the gun had been found, unless it had been afterwards disturbed, it could not have been the cause of the death; and the next was, that if it had killed Sir John, it must have been loaded with ball; for the left lobe of the lungs had been perforated by a ball, which was ex-

tracted from the shoulder. On this discovery, they were about to summon Mr. Groves to give an explanation; but the servants said he was so ill that they had carried him to bed; and the doctor, having visited him, recommended deferring the inquiry till the next day. It, however, occurred to them to examine if the gun was loaded, and it proving to be charged with shot, the question seemed settled, and the corollary was pretty clear—there was no accident; the Baronet had been shot designedly. This being the case, a groom was dispatched to summon some of the county magistrates, and also an eminent surgeon from the nearest large town; and then Lord Belton and the General repaired to their friends, who were still discussing the event in the dining-room.

A death so sudden, while it was believed to be accidental, was sufficiently shocking; but the moment the whisper was circulated that the baronet had been murdered, every face was blanched, and every heart quailed. Who could have done it? In the kitchen, and the servants' hall, and the steward's room, and the dining-room, that was the question that engaged everybody's thoughts, and exercised

everybody's ingenuity. As the dead man's purse and watch were found about him, it was clear that robbery was not the object of the assassin. What, then, could be the motive? Sir John was not a hard landlord, and there was no reason to suppose that anybody about the country, high or low, bore him an enmity. With his neighbours he was on exceedingly good terms; and as for his gallantries, whatever evils they might have entailed upon his victims, nobody had ever evinced any disposition to revenge them. A year's rent excused, or some advantages granted in the renewal of a lease, had shut some mouths that might have been disposed to complain; and with respect to Bessie Lee, the latest victim whose fate had made any sensation, she had neither father nor brother to avenge her wrong. She was the only daughter of a widowed mother, whose heart, to be sure, had been slowly breaking ever since her death, but who had neither means nor inclination to render evil for the evil she had received.

"It couldn't be that little devil, Jessie Matthieson, could it?" said Betty, one of the housemaids, who belonged to the party in the kitchen.

"Lauk! how should it be she!" exclaimed Dolly, the kitchen-maid.

"There's no telling," said Betty. "She might come back again unknownst to anybody, and hide herself in the wood."

"But what should she want to kill master for?" inquired Sarah, the laundry-maid.

"There's no telling," said Betty; "perhaps she'd do it out of revenge."

"Revenge for what?" inquired Dolly.

"There was more 'twixt master and she than people supposes," said Betty, with a very significant nod.

"No! was there?" said Dolly.

"Now he's dead and gone," said Betty, "there's no harm in speaking. One night as I'd been up late, plaiting myself up a cap for Sunday, what should I see, as I was going up the back stairs to bed, but Mr. Groves and Jessie Matthieson at master's door. Mr. Groves hearing of somebody, looks back and sees me; so he pushes Jessie into master's room, and then he comes back to me, and says, says he —putting his finger on his lip, so—'mum,' says he; and he slips a crown piece into my hand; and next day master gived me a guinea."

"Why, then, as sure as a gun," said Dolly,

"it *was* Jessie that Gregory heard about at Hillside."

"I'd lay my life on it," said Betty. "I knew all the while who it was; but, in course, it wasn't my business to speak."

"But suppose she wanted to kill him, how should she know how to fire a gun?" said Sarah.

"Ah, or to load it?" said Dolly.

"Why, you know," answered the sagacious Betty, who was a person that prided herself on seeing very far into a millstone, "Matthieson, her father, was gamekeeper. Perhaps he shewed her how."

"He might, sure enough," said Dolly. "She'd be seeing him load the guns and clean 'em, and taking 'em to pieces and putting 'em together again, and she might have picked it up."

"There's no telling," said Betty. "I've heard of such things being done afore now. There was a young woman, in the place as I come from, as shot a young man for treating of her ill. It was afore my time, but mother used to tell of it, and I believe he walks to this day."

"Lauk," said Dolly, "you never seed him, did you?"

"I can't say as ever I did," answered Betty; "but I've often heard my aunt say that one night late, as she was coming across the churchyard, she see him sitting upon his own grave-stone, as sure as ever she seed anything in her life."

"Lauk! how frightened I should ha' been!" said Dolly. "What did she do?"

"Why, she said she'd ha' spoken to it, for she was as bold a woman as ever you know'd, my aunt was—she was afeard of nothen; but just as she was coming up to it, it rose majestic-like, and walked slowly away."

"My mother once seed a spirit," said the laundry-maid. "It was a few nights after father died; mother was lying awake, and she heard three little taps at the window, and she looked up, and what should she see but father standing there, looking in at her. She said she thought he came to reproach her for taking on so."

"I've heard say," said Dolly, casting an uneasy glance over her shoulder, "that folks as are murdered always walks."

"It's my opinion," said Betty, "that nobody as dies a violent death ever lies quiet in their graves."

"It's not nat'ral to think they should," said Sarah, "when they're taken away in the midst of their sins, as a body may say."

This agreeable strain of conversation had lasted some time, when it was interrupted by the falling of a plate which had been set upon its edge to drain, on which occasion the overwrought nerves of the fair interlocutors relieved themselves by a simultaneous scream; and after this, being too frightened to sit up any longer, they went to bed, agreeing to sleep all three together, lest Sir John should take it in his head to commence his nocturnal rambles without further notice.

"Whoever shot him didn't hide himself to do it," said Thomas, the footman, in the servants' hall. "They must have been face to face to him—viz-a-viz, as one may say; so, if he wasn't dead, he could tell us all about it."

"But what the davy Mr. Groves was a doing is a thing I don't understand," said John. "Where was his eyes that he didn't see who did it. There's something mysterus-like about that, as I can't make head nor tail of."

"Perhaps he was shot from behind the

wall, you know; there's a low wall hard by, or from behind a tree."

"It's my opinion it's been one of them ere poachers as master got sent to jail last year," said Jem, the groom. "They'll be out now-about, and one on 'em was a desperate fellow as ever I see."

"Hand us over the jug, Bill," said Samuel, the coachman. "I remember when I druv Major O'Reilly in Ireland, there was a gentleman shot just in this here sort of a way, as he was walking in his own park, and nobody could ever tell who done it."

"It's a singler thing," said Bill—"uncommon singler!"

"If it wasn't for the ball, I should say it was an accident," said Thomas. "Somebody might have been shooting in the wood, and Sir John might ha' come across him *imperview*, as the French say."

"What do you mean by *imperview?*" inquired Jem.

"Sudden," explained Thomas.

"Sir John Lake, he as lived at Denham Park when I was coachman at Lord Combe's, had his eyes shot out just in that sort of a way," said Samuel. "There was he and my

lord and Colonel Travers, and two or three on 'em out a shooting in the preserves at Denham, and the colonel shot his eye out as clean as my hand. Draw us another jug, Bill—will ye?"

"Well, he'll never ride Roan Bess no more!" said Jem, with some pathos. "Little I thought when we left Calderwood this morning, that he'd never mount her again."

"I suppose," said Samuel, "some of the carriage horses 'll be sold. My lady wont keep 'em all."

"They wont be hern," said Jem. "I take it, they'll all go to the next heir, with the rest of the property."

"No, no," said Samuel, "not the horses wont– they're what you call personals; the new squire will have nothing to do with 'em."

"I wonder what sort of a chap he is!" said Bill.

"They say he's a fast goer," said Jem.

"My lady and he never could make no squares of it," observed John.

"My lady has too much *hotoor*," said Thomas. "I was always of that opinion."

"What's *hotoor?*" inquired Jem.

"It's the French for pride," condescendingly explained Thomas.

"She'll have to come down now," said Samuel, emptying the jug.

"I say, coachee," said Jem, "that arnt fair. Leave us a drop."

"Too late, my lad," said Samuel. "You should ha' spoke afore. Sorrow makes folks dry, they say," added he, with a knowing wink.

"Nothing like drownding sorrow—is there, coachee?" said John.

"Well, I'm for the land of Nod," said Samuel. "Let them stay up as likes."

"I suppose I'll have to stay up all night with Mr. Groves," said Thomas; "he's in an awful way."

"There's the dining-room bell," said John. "They'll be wanting the supper-tray, I suppose. Some on 'em hadn't much dinner, to be sure; we'd only just been round with the entries when Mr. Burton was called out."

"Sir James Colman took care to get his dinner, though," said Thomas. "He cleared the dish of cutlets, and ate up the *vola-vont*."

"Werry right," said Bill. "What should

one man lose his dinner for, 'cause another man's shot? that wont feed him."

"I'll wager Bill's grief will never spoil his stomach," said Jem.

"What for should it?" said Samuel. "Every dog has his day, and the squire's had his, and now it's his'n that's got the next turn;" and with this philosophical reflection the party separated.

"Ah, Dieu!—quelle horreur!" exclaimed Melanie, Lady Colman's French maid, in the housekeeper's room. "Mais, Monsieur, c'est affreux! Je n'en peux plus, moi! Ah! quel pays!"

"Ce n'est rien," said Monsieur Guimard, the chef de cuisine at Eastlake, who had been longer in England than Melanie; "absolument rien. En Irlande, c'est une affaire de tous les jours."

"Mais, Monsieur!"

"On vous vise là, en plein jour, tout à son aise, comme si les hommes étaient des lapins."

"I want a cup of tea for my lady, if you please, Mrs. Milford," said Ellis, Lady Eastlake's maid.

"How is she now, Mrs. Ellis?" inquired Burton.

"She looks shocking bad," replied Ellis; "but she hasn't spoken a single word yet. But I think if I could get her to take a cup of tea, it might rouse her and bring her to herself."

"If she could but cry!" said Mrs. Milford, the housekeeper. "I remember when I lost my poor dear husband, it was like to kill me till the tears came, and then I was easier."

"I'm afraid it will go hard with my lady," said Burton, shaking his head. "She's never had any trouble, and she don't know how to bear it."

"And she don't know the worst yet," said Mrs. Ellis. "She doesn't know he was murdered. The doctor desired she shouldn't be told at present. But is it certain that it wasn't his own gun that killed him, Mr. Burton?"

"Too certain, I'm afraid!" said Mr. Burton.

"Then who in the world can have done it?"

"God only knows," answered Burton. "It isn't for us to judge."

"But is there anybody you suspect?" said the housekeeper.

"No, no," replied Burton; "I can't say that there is. It would be very wrong to suspect anybody of such a crime without very good grounds."

"Perhaps we shall hear more about it when Mr. Groves comes to his recollection," said Mrs. Milford. "Sure, he must have seen somebody about."

"There's no saying," replied Burton; "a dozen people might hide themselves in that wood, and not be seen by anybody that kept the paths."

"Peut être il s'est tué lui même, ce pauvre homme!" said Melanie; "car ce sera bientôt le mois de Novembre; et c'est dans ce mois là que les Anglais se tuent, n'est ce pas?"

"Beaucoup, mais pas tout le monde," said Monsieur Guimard, smiling.

"Mais enfin, c'est vrai qu'on a un goût prononcé pour le suicide dans ce pays ci— n'est ce pas, Monsieur Guimard?"

"Sans doute, que c'est un peuple triste, melancholique, et que leur institutions et leur manière de vivre ne disposent pas à la gaiété," returned Guimard. "On ne danse pas, c'est à dire, peu; il n'y a presque pas de jardins publics; et le dimanche il n'y a nul divertisse-

ment—on passe la journée, toute entière, à l'église."

"Ah, mon dieu, que cela doit être ennuyant!" said Melanie; "quel triste pays! Ces pauvres Anglais! je trouve qu'ils font bien de quitter une vie où il doit avoir si peu de plaisir pour eux. Et il y a dix ans que vous supportez cette vie là, Monsieur?"

"Que voulez vous, Mademoiselle?" replied Monsieur Guimard. "Ces insulaires sont riches à jetter leur argent par les fenêtres, et cependant ils n'ont pas la moindre idée de faire la cuisine. Eh bien! on vient ici, c'est à dire, on s'immole pour dix ou quinze ans; on vous fait des appointements superbes; on fait son petit pécule, et puis, on retourne à son pays, finir gaiement la vie."

"A Paris. Ah, Monsieur! Quelle ville! C'est là, vivre."

"Yes," said Mrs. Milford, to Lady Carleon's abigail, Mrs. Dawson; "she's a remarkably handsome cat. I took her a kitten from the gardener that was going to drown her, and brought her up by hand, and she follows me about like a dog. She's the sensiblest creature, too, I ever saw."

"Puss! puss! Come here, puss!" said Mrs. Dawson.

"Do you know, ma'am," continued Mrs. Milford. "I sometimes think those poor dumb animals have some sort of knowledge when anything extraordinary's going to happen. It's a very remarkable thing, but yesterday I couldn't keep her out of Sir John's room, do what I would; twice I found her there, hid under the bed—a thing I never knew her do before in my life."

"My aunt had a cat," returned Mrs. Dawson, "that, she said, she was certain, always knew when there was going to be a death in the family. As sure as anybody was going to die, Pen would disappear, and never come back till the funeral was over."

"There's no doubt, ma'am," said Mrs. Milford, "that Providence often sends us warnings, but we're such poor blind creatures, that we never open our eyes to the truth till it's too late. The dreams I had, I'm sure, last night! I'd been busy all day getting ready for the company that was to come this morning, and it was twelve o'clock before Mr. Burton and I sat down to a bit of supper.

Mr. Guimard sent us in a nice *fricandeau*, and a dish of mushrooms done with cream, that had come out of the dining room, and some of his French pastry; and as we were so tired, Mr. Burton made us a tumbler of punch. I'm sure I thought I should have fell asleep before I could get my clothes off. Well, ma'am, if you'll believe it, though I declare I'd never sat down for five minutes the whole day, I couldn't rest. There I was, turning from side to side; and every time I closed my eyes, I'd the most terrifying dreams, that I started up quite in a fright—nothing but murders, and robberies, and people pursuing me to kill me; and I saw poor Sir John as plain as ever I saw him in my life, in his dressing gown and slippers, standing at his own bed-room door—the room he's now stretched in a corpse; and he called, 'Milford! Milford! Milford!' just so, three times. My mind misgave me something was going to happen."

"Well, ma'am," said Mrs. Dawson, "there was a circumstance occurred some years ago, in the place I come from, that shews that dreams oughtn't to be despised—many a time I've heard my mother tell it. There was a young woman there that had kept company

with a young man for a long time—I don't know that it wasn't as much as two years; and many a time he had pressed her to fix the day, but she never would. Well, ma'am, at last he says to her, one night, 'Betsy,' says he, 'do you ever mean to have me, or not? I wish you'd just say *yes* or *no*, at once.' 'Well, then, James,' said she, 'to tell you the truth, I don't know, for I haven't made up my mind about it yet myself.' With that, ma'am, he gave her a look that, she said, made her blood run cold—for she told her sister of it when she came home—but she'd such a spirit, that though she meant to have him all the while, she wouldn't be conquered; she told her sister that she wouldn't be frightened into having any man, though many a time her sister had warned her not to drive James too far, for there was always something dark about the young man, and close, and so was all his family. Well, ma'am, when the sister went to bed that night, she dreamt that she was walking by the side of the canal, and that the wind came and took off her new bonnet that she'd been buying that very day, and blew it into the water; and that James—that was Betsy's sweetheart—came up, and

said he'd get it out with the hook of his umbrella, and he did; but what should Jane see when he lifted the bonnet out of the water, but her sister's face under it. She said she saw it as plain as ever she saw anything in her life. Well, ma'am, the very next Sunday night—that was on a Friday—the two young people went a walking together; and whether she'd been teasing him was what nobody could ever tell—but they were both found in the canal the next day, drowned—no doubt he'd pushed her in. Her sister often said she never could forgive herself for allowing her to keep company with him, after the warning she had had."

"How very shocking!" said Lady Frances, as the dismayed visitors sat round the fire in the dining room. "It has given me quite a *frisson*. I don't know when I shall recover it!"

"It has taken away all your colour, Frances," said Lady Carleon; "look at her Lord Belton; did you ever see anything so white as Frances is?"

"I'm sure I shall never close my eyes all night," said Lady Colman; "there's something so terrific in sleeping under the roof with a murdered man?"

"And, perhaps, under the roof with the murderer," said Sir James Colman. "I'd advise you to lock your doors, ladies."

"Oh, good Heavens, Sir James!" cried all the ladies, "how can you talk in that horrid manner? The assassin can't be in this house."

"That's more than we can answer for," said Sir James.

"You don't suspect any of the servants?" said Lord Belton.

"I don't know," replied Sir James.

"You mustn't attend to what Sir James says, Lord Belton," said Lady Colman. "He's the most suspicious person in the world."

"I've seen more of mankind than you have, Lady Colman," said Sir James, who was an old K.C.B. "Commanding a regiment for fifteen years, gives one a great insight into human nature."

"What do you mean to imply," said Lord Belton. "You don't suspect Groves?"

"We shall hear what the magistrate says," answered Sir James. "You've sent for one, I suppose?"

"Yes, and for Reynolds the surgeon," replied Lord Belton. "But with respect to Groves, he's a young man of excellent character,

and I know his family well. He lived six years with Gordon, before Sir James Eastlake took him; and Gordon would not have parted with him on any account had he not been going to the Continent, and resolved on having only foreign servants. Besides, Groves could have no possible motive. He couldn't have a better place or a better master, for poor Eastlake was a thoroughly good-natured man, and I know he was very much attached to Groves."

"I never shall forget his face," said the quiet Lady Louisa, Lady Carleon's youngest daughter, who seldom spoke unless she was spoken to. "I'm sure, whenever I look in the glass I shall fancy I see it over my shoulder."

"It was natural he should be dreadfully shocked," said Lord Belton. "Besides, the having to communicate such an event to the mother was enough to unnerve any man."

"I remember seeing him with Eastlake in London," said Captain Wilmot, "and I rather liked his looks. I thought he was just the sort of servant I should have liked to have."

"I always did think so," said Belton; "so

much so, indeed, that had I known Gordon was going to part with him, I should have offered to take him."

"Have nothing to do with him," said Sir James Colman.

"I wouldn't have anything to do with him now, certainly," said General Goring, "because it would be disagreeable to have a person about one that was connected with such unpleasant recollections; but, otherwise, I confess, there was nothing in his demeanour that struck me as at all remarkable. I think his agitation was perfectly natural, and not more than any man who hadn't very strong nerves might have betrayed."

"But isn't it very strange," said Lady Louisa, "that he should assert that the gun went off and killed Sir John, when he must have known to the contrary?"

"That remains to be explained, certainly," said Lord Belton. "But I think he was so confused that he didn't know what he said. The doctor told me that his mind was wandering, and that he mustn't be interrogated, lest he should become delirious."

"It's in his favour, certainly," said Sir

James, "that the gun was found loaded, because it would have strengthened his position very much to have discharged it."

"Undoubtedly," said Lord Belton, "and he would assuredly have done so if there were any foundation for your suspicions."

"Men are guilty of strange oversights sometimes," said Sir James.

"What a dreadful thing it is for Lady Eastlake!" said Lady Colman. "I cannot imagine any one less fitted to bear such a reverse."

"She, that would never let him marry!" said Lady Carleon. "What short-sighted mortals we are, to be sure!"

"One ought not to say anything unkind of her now," said Lady Colman, "but it was certainly very selfish of her to prevent his marrying merely for her own interest."

"She's got her reward," said Sir James.

"How she must regret it now!" said Lady Louisa. "Poor thing!"

"You'll stay here, I suppose, for a few days, to act for Lady Eastlake?" said Colonel Wrangham, in a low voice, to Lord Belton.

"Certainly," said Belton; "I can't leave her in her present situation."

"It's a devilish awkward circumstance," said the colonel; "it quite deranges my book. What do you mean to do, Wilmot?"

"Devil take me if I know," said Wilmot. "I don't go to Aylesford's till the middle of next month, and where I'm to hang out till then, I'll be shot if I know! What shall you do, general?"

"I'm thinking of going to Otterley," said the general. "One can't shew one's face in London at this time of the year, you know."

"By the bye, that's a capital idea," said Colonel Wrangham. "Otterley's the very thing! I'll go there, too. You'd better come with us, Wilmot."

"But I'm not acquainted with Grenville," said Wilmot.

"Oh, never mind," said Colonel Wrangham, "that doesn't signify. He's the most hospitable fellow in the world, Grenville is; Goring and I will introduce you."

"Oh, come, to be sure," said the general; "he'll be delighted to see you. Otterley's a capital refuge for the destitute."

CHAPTER XVI.

"*Cornelia.* Let me come to him; give me him as he is; if he be turned to earth, let me but give him one hearty kiss, and you shall put us both into one coffin.

"*Hortensius.* Your kindest office is to pray for him.

"*Cor.* Alas! I would not pray for him yet."

THE WHITE DEVIL.

"*Hieronimo.* How? was thy son murdered?

"*Painter.* Alas, sir, I had no more but he.

"*Hier.* Nor I—nor I; but this same one of mine
Was worth a legion."

SPANISH TRAGEDY.

"He poisons him i' the garden for his estate."

HAMLET.

TOWARDS midnight, Lady Eastlake, who, till then, had sat in a large arm-chair in her own dressing-room, silent and motionless, looking, as Ellis said, "dreadful," but shewing no external demonstration of what was passing within, but by the involuntary expression of

her features, raised her head, and said to Ellis, "Is he in his own room?"

"Who, my lady," said Ellis.

"Who! He that—" and she paused and beat her breast, unable to articulate further.

"Master's in his own room," said Ellis.

Thereupon Lady Eastlake rose, and advanced towards the door.

"You'd better not go, my lady—you'd better not, indeed!"

"Be quiet, girl, and stay where you are!" said Lady Eastlake, in a low but decided tone; and whilst Ellis retreated, she closed the door, and proceeded along the gallery to Sir John's room. There sat, weeping bitterly, Sir John's old nurse, a favourite retainer of the family, and two of the servants, watching the corpse that was stretched on the bed and covered by a sheet. Lady Eastlake, by a commanding motion of the hand, bade them all retire. The two servants instantly obeyed, but the nurse rushed towards her, and throwing herself on her knees at her feet, and seizing her hands, which she kissed with passionate ardour, cried, whilst her sobs almost took away her breath, "They've murdered him!—they've murdered him, the villains!

There he lies, on his own bed, a corpse, with a ball through his beautiful breast! And you and I that he should have buried and seen laid in our graves, here we are crying and tearing our hair! But where's the murderer? Where's the villain that fired the shot and took away his beautiful life, and left us here to mourn for him? Sure, you wont let him away! Shan't he hang as high as Haman for it? Doesn't the Scripture say 'life for life,' my lady? Shall we be more merciful than God Almighty?"

"Murdered!" said Lady Eastlake, still speaking low; "no, not murdered, Nelly."

"I say *murdered!*" cried Nelly, starting from her knees and rushing towards the bed, "and the doctor says *murdered*, and Lord Belton says *murdered*, and they all say so;" and with her left hand she threw off the sheet, whilst with her right she pointed to the mark on the naked bosom where the ball had entered.

"Murdered!" said Lady Eastlake, slowly, her mind apparently incapable of entertaining the idea.

"Ay," said Nelly, in a concentrated tone that spoke volumes of vengeance, that only

waited to know where to wreak itself, "murdered! Who did it?"

"Marmaduke Rivers!" replied Lady Eastlake.

"I said so, in my heart," answered Nelly.

"He has murdered him for the estate," said Lady Eastlake.

"That's it," said Nelly. "I knew it the moment the doctor said it was a ball that killed him."

"Nobody else could have had any motive for taking away *his* life," said the mother.

"To be sure not," answered Nelly. "Wasn't he an angel to everybody?"

"Oh, he was!" cried Lady Eastlake, clasping her hands, and bursting at length into a passion of tears—"he was the joy of my heart and the delight of my eyes!" and throwing herself on the bed, she passionately embraced the body of her dear son, kissing, with eager kisses, the cold breast and marble features.

"Go, Nelly," she said. "Leave me alone with him to-night; let nobody interrupt us; he's my own—my own. You and I will speak again; but this night I must have him all to myself."

"You shall, dear," said Nelly. "Nobody

shall come near to part you from your own flesh and blood. I'll keep the door for you all night.

And she did; like a dog, she lay stretched upon the threshold, and watched till morning.

At an early hour, Mr. Dimond and Mr Granger, two of the county magistrates, arrived, accompanied by Mr. Reynolds, a celebrated surgeon, from the city of York; and after a little previous conversation with Lord Belton, they proceeded to inspect the body, followed by Mr. Bright, the village doctor, who had also been summoned.

The wound having been examined, the ball produced, and the fact of the murder clearly established, the next thing was to inquire into the circumstances, and endeavour to ascertain who was the assassin.

Jem, the groom, was first called, and interrogated with respect to his parting with Sir John, on the previous morning. He said that they had quitted Calderwood between eleven and twelve o'clock, and that Sir John had ridden his roan mare along the road, till they came to the Cane woods. That his master and Mr. Groves had there dismounted, and Sir John had desired him to proceed to the Castle,

with the horses, and tell Lady Eastlake that he should be home to dinner; which he had done. He had never seen his master since, till he was brought home dead; nor Mr. Groves, till he saw him in the hall, when he brought the news of what had occurred.

Lord Belton and General Goring described Mr. Groves' appearance in the dining-room, and related what he had said. The servants who first witnessed his arrival, stated, that he came in by the back door, looking very pale, and very much agitated; and that he said immediately, before they had asked him any questions, "Master's gun's gone off and shot him." When they asked him where he had left him, and if he had been for the doctor, he answered that he had left him in the wood, at the Four Stones; and that the doctor could do nothing, for he was dead. They had then taken him up into the hall, and called Mr. Burton out of the dining-room, to whom he had given the same account.

Mr. Groves was then inquired for, and Burton said he had just come from him; that he was better, and was dressing himself, and would wait upon the gentlemen immediately. Accordingly, he presently entered the room,

leaning upon Thomas. He walked feebly, and as, when Thomas withdrew his arm, he seized hold of the bed-post, as if unable to support himself, Mr. Reynolds recommended that he should have a seat—his mind would be more disengaged, and his memory clearer. A chair was therefore drawn forward, and placed opposite to where the magistrates and gentlemen had ranged themselves. Each party had a side view of the bed, where the body lay, over which the sheet had been replaced. Mr. Groves cast a glance that way, as he took his seat, and then he drew out his handkerchief, and wiped away the perspiration that gathered thick upon his brow.

"Have the goodness," said Mr. Dimond, "to narrate, as distinctly as you can, the circumstances that took place yesterday, after Sir John Eastlake left Calderwood. Did you and he leave it together?"

"Yes."

"On foot, or on horseback?"

"On horseback. We rode as far as the woods, and then Sir John said he should shoot through the woods home, and we dismounted."

"Were you aware of Sir John's intention to return by the woods, before you left Calderwood?"

"Yes; he mentioned it the day before."

"Were other persons also apprised of it?"

"Yes, several."

"It was generally known at Calderwood, was it?"

"Yes, I dare say it was."

"Well, after the groom had left you with the horses, what happened?"

"We went into the wood, and Sir John shot several brace of birds—I think it was five brace—and two pheasants; and I carried them for him."

"Well, go on; what happened next?"

"When we came near Martin's farm, Sir John told me to go round that way, and leave Martin a brace of birds and a pheasant, with his compliments, and then to overtake him."

"And did you so?"

"Yes; that is, I left the birds, and then I went on till I came to the Four-stones, without seeing anything of master."

"And there you came up with him?"

"When I got there, he was lying on the ground, dead."

"Then, you didn't see him fall?"

"No, he was dead before I came up to him."

"And how do you suppose his death was occasioned?"

"I believe his gun went off, by accident, and shot him?"

"What is your reason for thinking that?"

"I was told so."

"Told so? By whom?"

"By a young woman that I found there—at the Four Stones, with him."

Here every one looked astonished; it was quite a new feature in the case.

"What is the name of the young woman, and how came she to be there?"

"Her name is Lucy Graham; she's the daughter of Farmer Graham, a tenant on the estate."

"But what was she doing there?"

"I don't know. When I came up to her, she looked very much frightened; and when I asked her what had happened to Sir John, she said she believed it was his own gun that had killed him, for that she had seen nobody."

"Where is this young person to be found?" inquired the magistrate.

"At her father's house, I dare say," said Burton. "They are very respectable people."

"Give me leave," said Mr. Bright, the village doctor. "When I went from here, last night, I was informed that Farmer Graham had been in search of me. I therefore went to his house, and found he had summoned me to see his daughter. She had been taking a long walk, they said, and they fancied she had met with something to alarm her, for she had fainted repeatedly since her return. I administered what I thought necessary, and advised them not to disturb her with questions, as I thought there was a good deal of wildness and excitement about her eyes. If she was not better this morning, they were to let me know; but as I have heard nothing, I conclude she is."

"She had better be sent for immediately," said Mr. Granger. "In the meantime, we will hear what further Mr. Groves has to tell us. What did you say when the young woman told you that she believed Sir John had been killed by his own gun? Did you testify any doubt of that being the case?"

"I don't think I did."

"Then you believed it?"

"Yes."

"Did you examine the wound?"

"No."

"Nor the gun? Didn't you ascertain whether the gun was discharged?"

"No."

"That was very strange. What did you do, then?"

"I came home to give information of what had happened."

"And what did the young woman do?"

"She stayed there."

"Alone, with the body?"

"Yes."

"She was not there when we reached the spot," said Lord Belton.

"I imagine she was seized with terror, and came away," said Mr. Bright. "That accounts for the condition in which I found her."

"But Sir John's death still remains altogether unaccounted for," said Mr. Dimond. "You say, Mr. Burton, the young woman is respectable?"

"Very much so," returned Mr. Burton.

"What could she be doing there? The Four Stones, if I recollect rightly, must be at least five miles from this."

"It's fully that," said Burton. "What could have taken her there alone, I can't tell."

"What hour was it, Mr. Groves, when you reached the spot where you found Sir John and the young woman?"

"I don't know," replied Groves. "It was the afternoon."

"Was it light?"

"Yes."

"But you didn't arrive here till past eight o'clock," observed Lord Belton.

"I believe I was a long time coming," replied Groves. "I was so shook at seeing my master, that I couldn't walk very well."

"Didn't you meet anybody on your way?" inquired Mr. Dimond.

"Not that I recollect," answered Groves.

"And you know nothing whatever of the manner in which Sir John met his death, except what the young woman told you?"

"Nothing, because he was dead before I came."

"But it appears that it could not be his own gun that killed him; for in the first place, his gun was found loaded; and in the next, he was killed by a ball. He must therefore have been shot designedly."

"Who could have done such a thing?" said Mr. Groves, glancing slightly at the bed.

"Have you no suspicion of anybody yourself?"

"No."

"Did you not meet anybody in the wood, either whilst you were with Sir John, or after you had parted from him to carry the birds to Martin's?"

"Nobody whatever, till I saw Lucy Graham."

"Who did you see at Martin's farm?"

"I saw Mrs. Martin, I gave her the birds."

"Nobody else?"

"Only the children that were playing about the yard."

"It will be necessary to interrogate these Martins," said Mr. Dimond.

Here the investigation was interrupted by a message from Lady Eastlake, who desired to see the magistrates and Lord Belton. They accordingly proceeded to her dressing-room; where they found her seated in her arm-chair, wrapped in a white dressing-gown. Her grey hair, which had hitherto been carefully concealed by a well-constructed *tour*, was now visible beneath her muslin night-cap; her eyes looked haggard, and her cheeks hollow, and she looked, altogether, twenty years older than she had done when she took her place at the dinner-

table the day before. Nelly was standing behind her chair, with a face all bleared with weeping, and a countenance in which grief and vengeance struggled for the mastery.

Lady Eastlake, making a great effort to restrain her tears, silently motioned the gentlemen to be seated; an invitation they accepted as silently, for they felt that hers was not a grief to be spoken to.

"I have sent for you," she said, speaking with a low tone and deliberate utterance, "to inquire if you have made any discoveries?"

"Nothing of any importance," replied Lord Belton, "with respect to the criminal. You are, I understand, aware that it does not appear to have been an accident; at least, we fear not."

"No, no!" murmured Nelly, shaking her head—"no, no; no accident—*we* know that."

"Hush, Nelly! Where the assassin has left no traces whereby to discover him," continued Lady Eastlake, "it is natural to direct our attention towards those whose interest is likely to be promoted by the crime."

"Certainly," answered the magistrates.

"You are probably not ignorant that there exists a person who will be relieved, by this

event, from considerable embarrassments—who, indeed, from a state of depressing poverty, will start at once into possession of the Eastlake estates."

"Mr. Rivers!" said Lord Belton.

"Ay!" said Nelly, between her teeth—"Marmaduke Rivers."

"Hush, Nelly; be silent! Marmaduke Rivers—the son of the late Sir John's——I mean," she said, unable to repress her sobs at the recollection that her beloved son was now the *late* Sir John—"I mean, the son of my late husband's sister."

"He is, undoubtedly," replied Lord Belton, "the person who will chiefly profit by this lamentable event; but I cannot entertain the idea for a moment, Lady Eastlake, that he would be capable of attempting to hasten his accession by an assassination."

"You have never known poverty, my lord; and you do not know whither it can drive its victims."

"I am not acquainted with Mr. Rivers," said Lord Belton, and there he paused and hesitated, for he felt greatly disposed to add, "Why did you leave him to struggle with a

degree of poverty, of which you seem so well to understand the pangs?" But it was not a moment for reproof.

"He is a man that has been long in difficulties," said Lady Eastlake. "He began by embarrassing himself with a law-suit, which he carried on for some years against me, as my husband's executor, and my son's guardian and trustee, in order to recover some property which he pretended he had a claim to. He lost his cause, and a great deal of money that he had spent upon it—a great deal for him, as his fortune was not large. However, he married Miss Raby, the heiress, and became a rich man; but then he took to gambling; he had always been fond of high play; and calculating, no doubt, on coming into this property, he has always lived beyond his means. The last time I heard of him, he was in the King's Bench."

"That's a melancholy history, Lady Eastlake," replied Lord Belton, "and I fear not an uncommon one; yet, we hear of very few instances of assassination provoked by that sort of distress, or even much greater. Poverty will not drive a well-disposed man to com

mit a murder, in order to better his condition."

"But you are assuming that Marmaduke Rivers is a well-disposed man, my lord."

"Has he ever given any proofs to the contrary?" inquired Lord Belton.

"A great many. My husband's sister, Margaret Eastlake, married ill. Colonel Rivers had nothing but his pay; she had twenty thousand pounds, but they always lived beyond their means; and when my husband came into this property, he presented her with thirty thousand pounds. She soon after died; and Colonel Rivers being then abroad, Sir John, my husband, brought young Marmaduke to Eastlake, and here he remained for several years, maintained and educated at our expense. To be candid, I cannot say that I ever liked him. Nelly, here, who saw more of him than I did, never thought well of him, either."

"No, no," said Nelly, who now felt herself called upon to give her opinion; "he was never one to please me. He was a close, haughty boy, that never opened his heart to anybody. He'd sit in a corner with a book for hours, rather than talk to a person, for the pride of

Satan was in him; and many a time I thought, when he looked at the dear baby in my arms—he that's a bleeding corpse now—that he envied him, because he was heir to everything, and he'd nothing, or next to nothing, to bless himself with; and so I told him many a time, because I saw it vexed him."

"As soon as he came of age," said Lady Eastlake, "forgetful of all the benefits he had received, he instituted the suit I just now alluded to, and carried it on with a bitterness that always appeared to me as much dictated by hatred as by interest. But he failed; and since that has, I have reason to believe, been sinking lower and lower; and is, I have no doubt, deeply in debt."

"But there is nothing in all that, to found a suspicion on, Lady Eastlake."

"Nothing," echoed the two magistrates.

"Have you any reason to suppose he has been lately in this neighbourhood?" inquired Mr. Granger.

"Sure, he wouldn't let us see him if he was," said Nelly.

"Besides, the act may not have been perpetrated by his own hand," observed Lady Eastlake.

"Sure, there's enough to do such things for money," said Nelly.

"But according to your own account, Lady Eastlake, money is exactly what he has not," said Lord Belton.

"Promises of what he would do, when he got the estate, might do equally well," said she.

"Ay, ay!" said Nelly.

"You must permit me to say, Lady Eastlake," observed Lord Belton, "that it would be highly improper—and, indeed, I must say, criminal—to cast the slightest suspicion of so odious a crime on Mr. Rivers, or on any person whatever, however low his condition, or urgent his necessities, upon such vague assumptions. He may be very much distressed, and very much in debt, for anything I know to the contrary; but I can be no party in any proceedings that could tend to implicate his name in this unhappy affair; and I beg distinctly to state, that I leave this room with my mind as free from any suspicion of guilt or co-operation on the part of Mr. Rivers, as I entered it. I dare say these gentlemen are equally uninfluenced.

"Decidedly so," said the magistrates. "Lady Eastlake has mentioned nothing that

could be looked upon as the slightest indication of guilt on the part of Mr. Rivers."

"And, perhaps, Lady Eastlake," continued Lord Belton, "you will pardon my recommending you, in the names both of justice and prudence, to be extremely cautious in making any allusion to the name of Mr. Rivers, in connexion with this distressing event, unless you have very different grounds to go upon from any you have alleged. The slightest whisper of such an imputation, must inevitably be very grievous to him; and, I am sure, in cooler moments, you would yourself feel infinite regret at having cast such a slur on the character of an innocent man."

With this, the gentlemen took their leave, Lady Eastlake bowing coldly as they quitted the room.

"It's the fortin', dear, that he'll get," said Nelly, looking contemptuously after them—"it's that blinds 'em."

CHAPTER XVII.

"Latet anguis in herbâ."

"Oh, then, I see that God must right me for my murdered son."—SPANISH TRAGEDY.

WHEN the gentlemen returned to resume the examination, they were informed that Mrs. Martin, the wife of the farmer, to whom Groves had carried the game on the preceding day, wished to speak to their honours. She was accordingly introduced. Her errand was to mention that she had found behind the wall, close to the spot where Sir John had been shot, a hat and a pistol. Hearing of the accident, she had felt a curiosity to look at the place, and had gone over early that morning with one of her children—it was not above half a mile from her house. Whilst she was

observing the spot, where the grass was glued together by the blood, the child had diverted himself by climbing over the wall, and on perceiving the articles above mentioned, he had called to her to come and see what he had found. The hat and the pistol she had brought with her. Burton took them from her and presented them to the gentlemen, glancing at the inside of the hat, whereon the name of the owner was written; whereupon his countenance expressed so much dismay, that Lord Belton said, "What is it, Burton? Whose hat is that?" Burton handed it to him without speaking.

"Leonard Graham," said Lord Belton—"who is Leonard Graham?"

"He is the brother of the young woman that Mr. Groves says he met at the Four Stones, my lord."

Hereupon every eye was turned upon Mr. Groves, whose countenance expressed the most unfeigned astonishment.

"The mist is clearing away," said Mr. Granger.

"This good woman, I think, may be dismissed," said Mr. Dimond. "You have nothing more to tell us?"

"No, sir," replied Mrs. Martin.

"By the bye, before you go," said Mr. Granger, "we wish to know if you did not receive some game from Sir John Eastlake yesterday?"

"Yes, sir, I did. Mr. Groves brought us a brace of partridges and a pheasant, with the squire's compliments."

"At what hour was this?"

"I believe it was between two and three."

"What did Mr. Groves say to you?"

"He said the squire had sent him with the birds, that's all; he went away directly, because he said he was to overtake his master."

"He said nothing else?"

"Nothing at all; he didn't come into the house; he gave them to me at the door."

Mrs. Martin was then dismissed; and Mr. Dimond inquired of Groves if he had not seen anything of Leonard Graham the day before, or if he had any reason to suppose he was in the neighbourhood of the Four Stones.

Mr. Groves said he had not. He hesitated a little, and seemed as if he were uncertain whether or not to give some information he possessed; but at that moment Lucy Graham

being announced, the general attention was turned in another direction.

Lucy entered the room, accompanied by her father and mother. She was evidently in an unnatural state of excitement, agitation, and terror; the unsettled look of her eyes, and the red spot on the upper part of each cheek, spoke plainly of the disturbed elements within. Geordie's face, on the contrary, was as pale and *abattu* as if he had just risen from a long sickness, whilst the mother's, though of a deadly white, too, had a strange expression of eagerness, curiosity, and determination. She cast her eyes sharply about the room as she entered, as if anxious to ascertain the exact position of affairs; and having taken in everything that was to be seen, at a glance, she settled herself into an attitude and expression of intense attention to what was to follow.

Whilst these three last new-comers yet remained standing close to the door by which they had entered, Mr. Granger having conferred a moment with the other gentlemen, beckoned Burton to the window, at the other end of the room.

"This is a very handsome girl," he said.

"Pray, was there supposed to be any sort of intimacy between her and Sir John Eastlake?"

"I believe she's a girl of very good character," replied Burton; "there's not a more respectable family on the estate than the Grahams. At the same time, I can't deny that master took a good deal of notice of her lately, though I never had any reason to think that she encouraged it."

"This has probably been the cause of the mischief," said Mr. Granger.

"It's to be feared so," said Mr. Dimond. "However, we shall probably get at the truth now."

They then took their seats, and commenced their investigation, by inquiring of Lucy when and where she last saw Sir John Eastlake alive.

"Yesterday," she answered, "at the Four Stones. She believed it was about three o'clock in the afternoon."

"Did you expect to see him there?"

"No."

"You didn't go there to meet him?"

"No."

"Nor by his invitation?"

"No."

"What was he doing when you first saw him?"

"He came out of the wood, where he had been shooting."

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"And did he speak to you? Describe his appearance and behaviour."

"He was in his shooting-dress, and had his gun and dogs with him."

"And what did he say to you?"

"I believe he asked me if I had come there to meet him," she said, casting down her eyes.

"And what did you answer?"

"I said, I had not."

"Well, go on; describe what followed."

"He went on talking in that sort of way——"

"Well?"

"And I begged him to let me go."

"And did he?"

"No, he would not."

"And what did you do?"

"I went down upon my knees, and told him that if he didn't——" here she paused in some confusion.

"Well!—what was to happen if he didn't?"

"Only that I would call for help."

"And did you?"

"No; for before I had time to do so he was shot."

"Who shot him?"

"I don't know."

"Describe how he was shot. From what direction?"

"From behind my back."

"Did you look round to see who it was?"

"No, I couldn't take my eyes from him."

"What did he do when he was shot?"

"He held up his whip at the person, and swore."

"Then he saw the person who shot him?"

"I think he did."

"Did he say anything else? Didn't he name anybody?"

"No; just as he was falling he called out for Mr. Groves twice."

"And that was all?"

"Yes; that was all."

"And you have no suspicion whatever of who it was that did it?"

"None."

"You have no reason to believe that it was any relation of your own?"

"Not any."

"How far is the spot called the Four Stones from where you live?"

"About five miles."

"And did you go there alone?"

"Yes."

"Did your father and mother know of your going?"

"No," replied Hannah Graham; "we knew nothing about it."

"Hush, woman!" said Geordie; "wait till you're spoken to."

"Allow me to ask you what was the motive of your taking so long a walk by yourself?"

Lucy was silent, whilst Hannah looked all eagerness to speak, but was restrained by her husband's reproof.

"You must have had some object," continued Mr. Dimond. "You must tell us what it was."

"I went there to meet a friend," replied Lucy.

"Your brother?" inquired Mr. Granger.

"No," eagerly answered Hannah; "it wasn't her brother."

Lucy also answered "No."

"You must tell us who it was."

"It was a young man."

"Your lover, perhaps?"

"Yes," answered Hannah, in spite of Geordie's frowns.

"What is his name?"

"William Bell," answered Lucy, in a faltering voice.

"And did you meet him?"

"I saw him."

"Was it before Sir John was shot, or afterwards?"

"Afterwards."

"And what passed after his arrival?"

"I bade him fly," said Lucy; for now she saw that a candid relation of what had passed was more likely to exonerate William than any attempt at concealment. "I bade him fly, for I thought it was he that had done it; but he said that he had no cause to fly, for it was not him. Then he loosened Sir John's cravat, and sprinkled water on his face, to try to bring him to himself, but he found he was quite dead."

"Had he seen Sir John fall?"

"No, but he heard the report of the gun."

"Where was he at the time?"

"In the wood, coming towards the Four Stones."

"And did he not mention that he had seen anybody on his way?"

"No; he said he had seen nobody."

"Have you any reason to believe that your brother was in the neighbourhood at the time?"

"No, not any."

"Have you more than one brother?"

"No, only one."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know."

"Have you seen him since Sir John was shot?"

"No."

"How long is it since you saw him?"

"Three or four days. He's away from home."

"But," said Lord Belton, "you saw Mr. Groves, didn't you."

"Yes, I did."

"And was the young man you speak of with you when Mr. Groves arrived?"

"No, he was gone."

"What! did he leave you there alone with the body?"

Lucy blushed, and was silent.

"Pray, what time," said Mr. Dimond, "may have elapsed between Sir John's death and the arrival of Mr. Groves?"

"I should think about half an hour, but as I fainted I don't know."

"And did anybody assist in recovering you when you fainted?"

"William Bell threw water in my face."

"Then he arrived whilst you were in a state of insensibility?"

"Yes, he did."

"And this young man had left you before Mr. Groves arrived?"

"Yes."

"That seems very singular. What was his reason for going?"

Lucy was silent.

"He'd reason enough," said Hannah.

Lucy's eyes filled with tears, and the large drops began to chase each other down her cheeks, whilst Geordie cast at his wife a look of indignation and reproach.

"I am sorry to distress you," said Mr. Dimond, "but we must be informed of the young man's motive for leaving you."

"We heard Mr. Groves coming," sobbed out Lucy.

"Oh, that was all! I understand. And you did not wish to be found together?"

Lucy was silent, whilst her mother gave a significant "Humph!"

"Perhaps," said Lord Belton, kindly, "your attachment is not sanctioned by your parents."

There was a moment's silence, and then Hannah Graham, with a glance at her husband and daughter that said "I will speak," blurted out, "He's a deserter from his regiment, and that's why he durstn't be seen!"

The tears rolled over Geordie's face, and Lucy's sobs were like to rend her breast. The magistrates were affected; Lord Belton turned away, and drew his hand across his eyes; Burton looked extremely sympathetic; and Mr. Groves wept outright.

"Perhaps you had better retire, Groves," said Lord Belton. "Your nerves have been so shaken that you are not able to bear this painful scene. "I believe," he said, addressing the magistrates, "his attendance may be dispensed with at present."

The magistrates acceded, and Mr. Groves attempted to rise, but his trembling knees would not support him, and Burton had to assist him out of the room.

"This is becoming very distressing," said Mr. Dimond, "and I am very sorry to press you with further questions, but we must be informed of every particular that can tend to throw a light on this unfortunate business. This young man, then, is a deserter?" Lucy answered only by her tears. "Pray, on what account did he desert? Was it on your account?"

"I believe it was," sobbed Lucy.

"The truth is," said Hannah, hardening herself against her husband's looks and her daughter's tears, "the truth is, that he was jealous of the squire; that it was brought him here."

"No, mother," said Lucy, "it was because he didn't get any letters from me that William came."

"Here's his own words," said Hannah, drawing a letter from her pocket, and presenting it to the gentlemen—"he tells himself plain enough why he deserted."

This proved to be William's letter—the one that Lucy had got from her cousin at the Post-office the day before, which Mrs. Graham had found in her daughter's bosom, when she undressed her and put her to bed, in a fainting state, on the preceding evening.

The letter consisted of but a few lines. It had no date, but the post-mark shewed that it had been sent from a place about thirty miles from Eastlake, two days before. It was evidently written under considerable irritation and excitement; and was to the effect, that the writer "had deserted from his regiment, at the certain forfeiture of his life, in consequence of the reports that had reached him about Sir John Eastlake, and her refusing to explain them and satisfy his doubts, in spite of his repeated entreaties that she would do so. The writer then proceeded to say, that be the risk to himself what it might, he was determined to see her; that he would be at the Four Stones for that purpose at such a time, where, if she wished to prevent the *most fatal consequences*, she would meet him—if she did not arrive within a certain period, he should at once proceed to the

village." The words *most fatal consequences* were underlined with double marks. The letter was signed "William Bell."

After conferring for a few moments amongst themselves, the gentlemen proceeded with the examination.

"Then the young man, William Bell, left you because he didn't wish to be found by Mr. Groves?"

"Yes."

"Did you know it was Mr. Groves that was coming?"

"No, we didn't know who it was; but in his situation he didn't wish to be seen by anybody; besides, he was afraid that, being a deserter, he would be suspected of the murder."

"He said that, did he?"

"Yes, he said so, when I pressed him to stay, because I knew he was innocent."

"How do you know that?"

"I'm certain of it. He told me so, and I should have known if he had not been telling the truth. Besides, if he had done it, he would have owned it to me at once."

"In all probability, under such circumstances, he would," said Lord Belton, in a low voice, to the magistrates.

"There's no saying," replied Mr. Dimond. "There's almost always a re-action immediately after a desperate act is committed; a man loses his nerve, the motives that caused the crime appear weak and insufficient, and his terror extinguishes his passion."

"Then the young man was gone before Mr. Groves arrived? Which way did he go?"

"He got over the wall."

"Over the wall! Pray, can you mention what he wore upon his head—had he a hat?"

"No; he had a fur cap."

"Had he any arms?"

"None, that I saw."

"And you have no reason to suppose that Mr. Groves saw him?"

"No, I'm sure he did not."

"What did Mr. Groves say when he arrived and saw his master dead?"

"He asked me who did it?"

"And what did you say?"

"I said I believed his gun had gone off and shot him."

"But why did you say that, when you tell us that he was shot from behind you, and that you believe Sir John saw his assassin?"

"I wasn't sure of anything."

"And what did Mr. Groves do then?"

"He looked to see if Sir John was quite dead, and then he said that if I would stay there, he would come to the Castle for assistance."

"And you did. How long?

"I don't know. I believe two or three hours. It was getting quite dark when I came away."

"You didn't wait till the people from the Castle arrived?"

"No; I was frightened, and came home."

"Frightened at what?"

"I don't know—at the dead body, I believe."

"Did the young man return to you when Mr. Groves was gone?"

"No; I didn't see him any more."

"Do you know where he is now?"

"No; I have not heard anything of him since."

After some private conversation betwixt the gentlemen, Mr. Dimond produced the hat and pistol, and inquired of Lucy if she knew anything of them. Not being near enough to perceive the name in the hat, she said she did not; but Mrs. Graham looked exceedingly

agitated, and Geordie drew a deep sigh, and turned, if possible, paler than before.

"There is a name in the hat," said Mr. Dimond, "that I am told is the name of your brother—*Leonard Graham.*"

Lucy looked surprised and anxious for further information, whilst Mrs. Graham became more and more nervous and restless.

"This hat and pistol," said Mr. Dimond, "were found this morning behind the wall, close by the Four Stones."

"He's lost them when he's been shooting owls to hang against the barn-door," said Hannah. "He was very careless of his things—no young man more so. I remember, he lately said he'd lost his hat somewhere." Whilst Geordie wrang his hands, and Lucy, thinking it now clear that Leonard was the criminal, forgot her lover to think of her brother, and gave way to a fresh burst of grief.

"I think you said you had not seen your brother for some days, and that you did not know where he was. Do *you* know where he is?" said Mr. Dimond, to the father.

"No," said the old man, shaking his head; "he went awa' over to Calderwood, o' Tuesday night, and I've never seen him since."

Hannah looked very angrily at her husband for admitting that Leonard was gone to Calderwood; but Geordie knew it was useless to attempt to conceal a circumstance so easily ascertained, and indeed already so generally suspected in the village.

"To Calderwood? What was his object in going to Calderwood?"

"To inquire after a lass he was fond of," said Geordie.

"Then his visit to Calderwood was in no way connected with Sir John Eastlake's being there?"

"I can't quite say that," replied Geordie. During this dialogue, Hannah's face grew from pale to red. She was flushed with anger and impatience at Geordie's straightforward mode of giving his evidence; but the old man so thoroughly believed in the guilt of his son, that although he would have been very glad that Leonard should escape, and would have done all he could to aid him in doing so, yet he did not think it right, by withholding the truth, to cast suspicions on William that would render the unfortunate young man's situation more embarrassing and dangerous than it was already. From the moment the news of the

baronet's death had reached them, both he and Hannah had suspected that Leonard might be the assassin; and when, in passing the lodge, Mrs. Matthieson took an opportunity of whispering to Hannah that her son's hat had been found on the spot, and that Mrs. Martin had just gone up to the Castle with it, the suspicion became certainty. Hannah, however, kept her information to herself, waiting to see what turn affairs were about to take, and resolved to avail herself of every circumstance that might arise in Leonard's favour. William Bell, she argued, in her own mind, was not in custody, and might never be taken; and if he were, his life being already forfeited, he was as ill off as he could be. Besides, even, if only for a time, suspicion were directed towards him, it would give Leonard a chance of escape. Her prejudice against William, and her passionate love for her son, blinded her to the injustice she was practising.

"In what way was your son's visit to Calderwood connected with Sir John Eastlake?" inquired the magistrate.

"There was a lass he was fond of, called Jessie Matthieson," said Geordie; "she's been awa' these three weeks past, and nobody could

tell what was 'come of her—some said the squire had got her at Hillside, and Leonard went to Calderwood to try and get news of her. He's gone, now, the squire," added Geordie; "the Lord has taken him, and the Lord 'ull judge him; but he was an awful man to be at the head of a parish. He sowed sorrow under many a thatch—and, may be, he's reaped the harvest of it himself, at last."

Everybody was affected by the old man's words, the truth of which were too well known; and the gentlemen, anxious not to prolong the painful scene further than was necessary, consulted together, whether the unhappy family might be dismissed. Mr. Granger, however, proposed one more question, and, producing the pistol, he asked them if they had ever seen it in Leonard's possession. They all agreed that they had not, and that, to their knowledge, he had no such weapon,

"By the bye," said Lord Belton, "we have not ascertained whether it is loaded. Give me leave. Yes," continued he, drawing the charge, "it is. That is very singular, too." And it *was* very singular; and was, indeed, almost sufficient to overthrow the previous persuasion that that pistol had been the instru-

ment of the murder, since there was no probability whatever, that a person in such haste to fly as to leave his hat and weapon behind him, should have stopped to load it again after he had fired with such fatal aim at his victim. Unless he had two pistols, this circumstance seemed much in Leonard's favour; although Hannah's subterfuge about shooting birds was quite overthrown, the pistol being loaded with ball.

The next thing to be ascertained, was whether Leonard had been seen at Calderwood; and, for this purpose, Mr. Groves was again sent for; but Burton found, on inquiry, that on leaving the magistrates, he had retired to bed. The gentlemen, therefore, desired he might not be disturbed, and ascended to his room. He *had* seen Leonard Graham at Calderwood; and the young man had asked him if he knew anything of Jessie Matthieson. He feared he had rather laughed at him than satisfied his inquiries. Leonard asked him if Jessie was with Sir John, or had been with him during his absence; and he had, out of jest, answered in a manner that left it doubtful. On being asked if Leonard was aware of the road Sir John intended to take on his return, he said it

was very probable he might; and it was afterwards ascertained from Jem, the groom, that he had mentioned to Leonard, that Sir John intended to shoot through the woods. They had both seen Leonard in Calderwood Park, the day before they left it; they had observed nothing particular about him, except that he was very anxious to obtain tidings of Jessie Matthieson.

Here the investigation, as far as it could be carried on upon the spot, appeared to terminate. It remained to make inquiries with respect to Leonard at Calderwood, and of William Bell at his regiment, and to endeavour to apprehend them both—both being liable to the suspicion of being, separately or conjointly, guilty of the murder.

But little information was elicited at the inquest that followed. The man at the little inn where Leonard had lodged, at Calderwood, had thought him in a very melancholy and desponding state of mind; he had spoken with considerable bitterness of Sir John Eastlake, on some occasion where the baronet's name had been mentioned; and had said, that such a landlord was a curse to his tenantry, and would be if he gave them their farms rent-

free. He had quitted the inn at a very early hour on the same morning that Sir John left Calderwood, but had not said where he was going, nor did anybody appear to have observed what direction he had taken. William Bell had not been heard of at his regiment; but they were actively in search of him, and hoped soon to be able to produce him; his character, previous to his desertion, had been exemplary.

Here the affair necessarily rested for the present; and in the meantime, till further information could be obtained, the verdict given was to the effect that the murder had been committed by some person or persons unknown.

END OF VOL. I.

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